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The Editors
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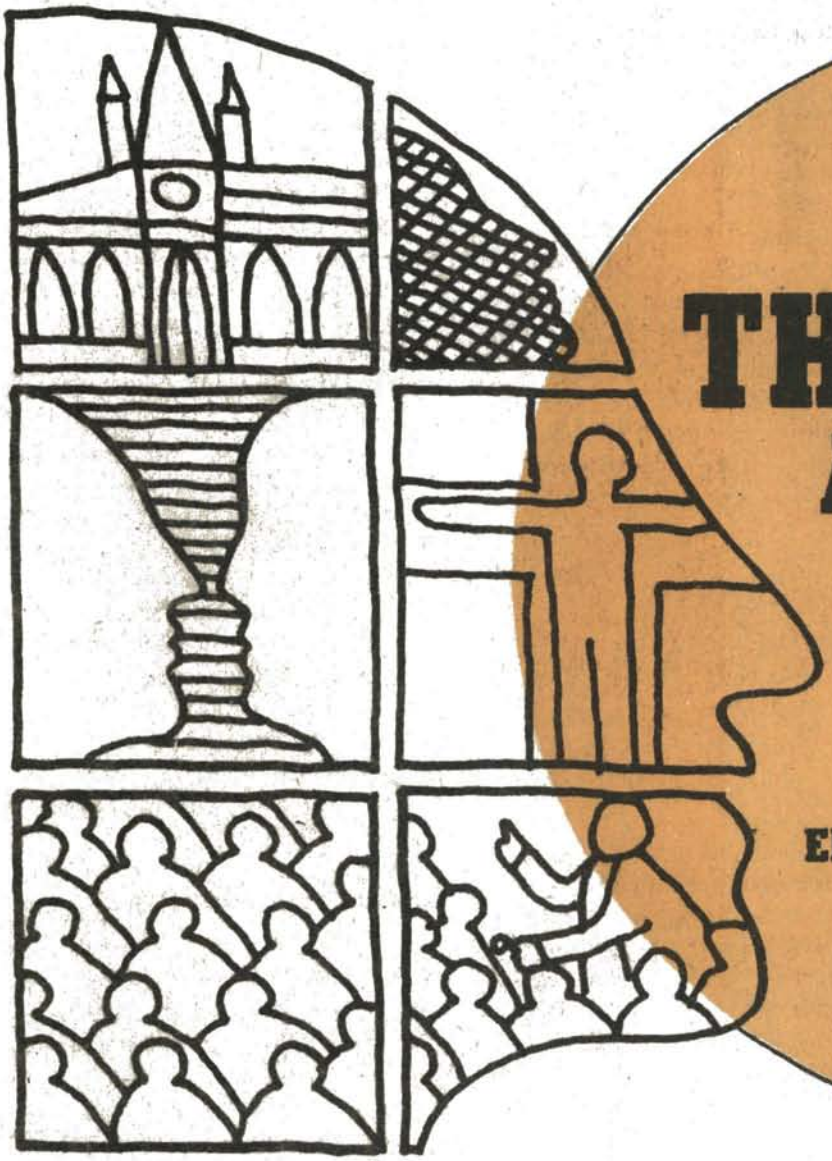

Contemporary theology issue

THEOLOGY AFTER THE SYNOD

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GAY RIGHTS: LAW & MORALITY

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Portland, Oreg.

To the Editors: David Carlin's commentary on "gay rights" ["Stamp of Approval," November 29] is disappointing to one who has admired his previous work. It lacked both logic and compassion.

His thesis is absurd: "gay rights legislation . . . constitute[s] an official stamp of moral approval for homosexual conduct." Legislation neither approves nor disapproves of such conduct. Instead, it forbids certain discrimination against people who do not choose their sexual orientation. That is the true "social context" of the legislation. . . .

Gay rights legislation has been the law in Wisconsin for over a year. No one believes that morality has been undermined there. But there is compelling evidence that gays are receiving less harassment.

Carlin closes with an allusion to some of his best friends who are gay. If he wasn't joking, he would do well to learn from them. They might give him a valuable perspective on justice and love in the face of officially sanctioned discrimination.

THOMAS HIGGINS

Episcopal comparison

Boston, Mass.

To the Editors: Regarding David R. Carlin's opposition to the protection of the civil rights of gay persons: How does the legal protection of equal employment opportunity — or access to public accommodation or to rental property, or equal treatment by credit agencies — imply *moral* endorsement of the conduct of those who are protected?

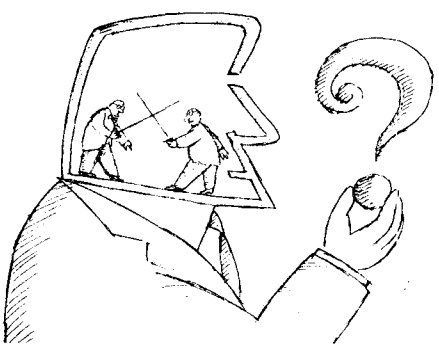
Many of us out here are convinced that the conduct of Roman Catholic bishops in refusing to ordain women is immoral. However, we are not opposed to protecting the civil rights of these bishops. They should be able to wear the clothes they want (even in public) and sleep at the hotels of their choice (providing they can afford the rates and do not create a nuisance to other patrons).

ALLAN J. STIFFLEAR

To chuck or not

Toledo, Ohio

To the Editors: Your November 29 issue carried a column by David Carlin, Jr., a self-identified "intolerant homophobe." I don't dispute Carlin's right to espouse his intolerance; I just find it sad that a supposedly progressive and Christian journal like *Commonweal* is still open to publishing a piece of gay-baiting this blatant. If Carlin identified himself as an "intolerant anti-Semite" or "intolerant black hater," you would have chucked the column. But homophobes apparently



are still welcome to use your space.

Why is it so difficult for the Carlins in our midst to distinguish between human persons who happen to be gay and their sexual activity? The official church has always done this: the American Catholic bishops in 1976, for example, wrote, "Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship, and justice. . . ." (Pastoral Letter on Moral Values, "To Live in Christ Jesus").

If a gay rights ordinance is proposed, why not protect the rights of the persons involved, but add explicitly that you don't endorse homosexual conduct?

REV. ROLAND CALVERT, O.S.F.S.

Patronizing piety

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: David Carlin spends so much time on his pre-emptive self-accusation of homophobia that he almost forgets to make his main point, which is that he is "extremely dubious" about gay rights legislation. Of course, Mr. Carlin doesn't really believe that he is homophobic; he uses the term against himself to prove that it is a buzz word leveled unthinkingly at any opponent of gay rights legislation.

In Mr. Carlin's view, gay rights is really a matter of trendy liberal pieties. This gives him room to speak against gay rights legislation while asserting that some of his best friends are homosexuals. His friends must be lucky people. Probably none of them has had his job or housing threatened because he was gay. Probably none of them has been threatened with abuse or violence, or has experienced the pain of separation from families or church.

Mr. Carlin adds that "the wrongness of homosexuality has been held" by our civilization "since time out of mind." This is a neat trick, since the modern conception of homosexual orientation is only a hundred years old. . . .

No, I don't think that Mr. Carlin is homophobic. The patronizing tone of his column speaks for itself: he is simply insensitive and unthinking on the topic of gay rights. . . .

DAVID BARBOUR

Laws of perfection

Dorchester, Mass.

To the Editors: Several thoughts on David Carlin's November 29 column "Stamp of Approval": Charges of homophobia can and often are a form of intolerance. I've been hit with the charge myself, and it irritates. But for all the cleverness of Carlin's turning the issue back to that of liberal intolerance, is he really saying that anti-homosexual prejudice is non-existent? I've never been active in his corner of the world (Rhode Island), but experience in Massachusetts and New York politics convinces me that

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WHO WILL JUDGE THE JUDGES?

IT COULD BE next week, or it could be next year, but sooner rather than later the country will be faced with another major turning point in its political composition. The present justices of the Supreme Court are a very enduring bunch — this year they will set the record for the oldest Supreme Court in American history. But they won't last forever. Mr. Reagan — or will it be Mr. Meese? — may soon have the opportunity to determine the character of the Court well into the next century. On what basis should those critical choices be made? And how should the power to make them be shared?

Debate about the first question has recently been provoked by Attorney General Meese's attack on the last sixty years of Supreme Court rulings and his demand that judges look to the "original meaning of constitutional provisions." This "jurisprudence of original intention" was immediately rejected as "facile historicism" by two of the sitting justices — William J. Brennan, Jr., and John Paul Stevens. Liberal critics charged that Meese's scruples about constitutional theory were simply a cover for his political agenda.

As far as we can see, the liberal critics are right. We say that despite our own unhappiness with a number of Supreme Court decisions frequently defended as "liberal." Most notable, of course, is *Roe v. Wade*, widely admitted even by liberal scholars who otherwise favor access to abortion to have been a dramatically unfounded substitution of Court power for legislative decision. But these same scholars can hardly accept Meese's alternative either, for all the kinds of reasons that Neal Devins and Benjamin Feder recently set forth in "Reading the Establishment Clause" (*Commonweal*, Sept. 20, 1985) or Francis J. Flaherty outlined here four years ago in articles on abortion (Oct. 23, 1981), and on church-state separation (April 23, 1982). Just like "strict constructionism," that catchphrase of the Nixon years, "original intention" won't do the job. In some cases, we don't know enough about the Framers' intentions to apply them to modern problems; in other cases, changed circumstances reveal that the narrower, specific intentions behind one part of the Constitution may be in tension with larger intentions expressed in other parts of the Constitution. Mr. Meese may try to squeeze his particular conservative, law-and-order objectives into the Framers' "original intention"; but as Stuart Taylor, Jr., recently pointed out in the *New Republic*, "original intention" would probably "handcuff" the police far more than the Warren Court did, banning all kinds of searches, warrants, wiretaps, and subpoenas that Mr. Meese's Justice Department uses daily — as well as possibly banning federal paper currency, civil-rights laws, and most of the president's war-making powers.

The shortcomings of "original intention" do not mean that justices should be free to read anything they like into the Constitution, thereby appropriating the power to confirm or veto at will the decisions of democratically elected legislatures. Of

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course, in their all-too-frequent cynical moments, lawyers like to say that the law is whatever judges say it is. But in fact there are other approaches to constitutional interpretation that avoid the inflexibility and sheer unworkability of "original intention" but still put limits on justices' preferences.

If the question of what philosophy should guide Supreme Court justices has been in the news, an equally important question has not: who should decide on this philosophy in the process of appointing justices?

The president, of course, appoints new justices — but "only with the Advice and Consent of the Senate." For some time it has been popularly believed that this process of advising and consenting should be quite limited. The candidate should not suffer from obvious ethical or intellectual deficits; the Senate should confine itself to narrow questions, say, of conflict-of-interest or legal competence. In 1970, President Nixon argued that the White House should not be "frustrated by those who wish to substitute their own philosophy or their own subjective judgment for that of the one person entrusted by the Constitution with the power of appointment." This view was widely enough held that, at the time Mr. Nixon nominated G. Harrold Carswell for the Court, a columnist in *Commonweal* feared that the Senate would never reject such a dubious nomination "unless the man is proved either a blackguard or a legal incompetent so cretinous that mention of a tort puts him in mind of Viennese pastry." The Carswell nomination did not, in fact, go through. But a year later the *New York Times* still editorialized that the president "is free to appoint justices who share his legal philosophy" and "whose broad philosophical outlook reflects his own." The *Times* wanted both president and Senate, however, to be concerned about matters of "stature," "breadth of vision," and "caliber"; it did not specify what these terms meant.

Fifteen years ago, *Commonweal* thought that this assumption of a restricted role for the Senate was wrong ("The Senate and the Court," Oct. 8, 1971). We still do. At that time, we cited a then-recent study in the *Yale Law Review* by Charles L. Black. Black believed that there was no constitutional, historical, or prudential reason for senators not to consider an individual's broad social philosophy in deciding whether or not to confirm a nomination. Much more recently, Lawrence M. Tribe has published *God Save This Honorable Court: How the Choice of Supreme Court Justices Shapes Our History* (Random House, $17.95, 171 pp.), a book that reinforces our earlier contention.

There is certainly no evidence that the "original intention" of the Constitution's Framers was to restrict the purview of the Senate in considering Court nominees. Indeed, prior drafts provided for appointment of judges by the Senate alone; it was only late in the game that the president was brought in at all. The Senate's restricted conception of its role is relatively recent; in the nineteenth century, it rejected one out of four presidential nominees.

Confusion has arisen largely from a mistaken analogy with the Senate's role in confirming appointments to the executive branch. After all, the chief executive should be able to choose individuals of his or her own political outlook to carry out his or her own policies; the Senate should limit itself to questions of basic integrity and competence. The Supreme Court, by contrast, is the pinnacle of an independent branch of our government. Since 1793 (when the Court refused Washington's request for advice on legal details of the Franco-American treaty), it has been clear that justices are not advisers to the president. They must sit in judgment on the constitutionality of executive acts as well as legislative ones.

All this is particularly relevant in the case of a president determined to "turn the Court around." In *The Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton noted that the Senate's role in the appointments process generally could be "an efficacious source of stability" in the face of a presidential effort to reverse completely the direction of government.

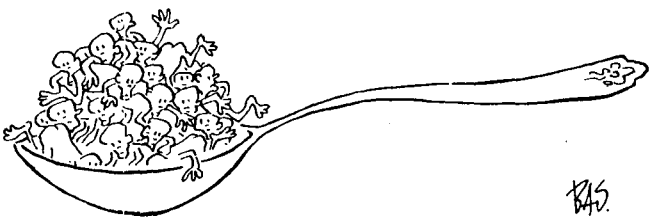
This expanded conception of the Senate's role should not be seen as carte blanche for simple political partisanship. There are conservative judges liberals should be happy to see on the Court. The fact that the Court is always better off with some mix of conservative and liberal voices should rule out a narrow political standard by either president or Senate. In a thoughtful review of Tribe's book in the December 16 *New Republic*, Duke University law professor Walter Hellinger summarizes the Senate's responsibility in considering nominees to the Court: "A senator certainly ought to probe for evidence of intelligence, integrity, and open-mindedness — a willingness to be persuaded by cogent argument. . . . But when a president does attempt to direct the Court's future course by submitting a nominee known to be committed to a particular philosophy, it should be a completely sufficient basis for a senator's negative vote that the nominee's philosophy is one the senator believes would be bad for the country."

BREAD AT THE BONE

A dying man once said that, "Where there is a will, there are relatives." Had he the time, he might have expounded that where there are legislatures, there are lobbyists. To rise and converge, legislation must pass, as in peristalsis, not only across the major trading floors, but through the endless lobbies. Labyrinthine Washington may be well-fed; it is undeniably well-buttered.

Amid the Capitol's congested halls, one advocate stands apart with lean serenity. The nature of its concern is that peculiar daily necessity: bread. Bread not for itself, nor for a limited constituency; but bread for the world.

As a "Christian citizens' movement" founded over a decade ago in light of the command to feed the hungry, Bread for the World has had a positive, dramatic effect on influencing



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national policy in regards to food assistance. In 1984-85, for example, BFW led a successful nationwide campaign which culminated in the Africa Relief and Recovery Act, appropriating $800 million for famine relief (enough food aid to feed ten million hungry people nearly a year), funds which last year surpassed all contributions to private relief organizations for African aid. In 1984, BFW's efforts helped prompt Congress to create a special Child Survival Fund as well, financing $25 million in basic health improvements for infants and children in developing countries. That single act is credited with saving the lives of a quarter million children. And at home, 450,000 more women and children have been covered by WIC, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, thanks in part to the tenacity of BFW and its members.

Now BFW, in spite of its remarkable achievements and faithfulness, is facing lean times itself. It has been forced to cut back its staff and to ask friends for more generous assistance. Many have responded, but the loaves still need multiplying. A basic membership in Bread for the World (802 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, Washington, D.C. 20018) is $25. It would be solid nutrition for thought and action in the new year.

Washington report

'GET BEYOND LABELS'

PRO-LIFE & PRO-FAMILY PLANNING

IT ISN'T ALWAYS deliberate, and it isn't necessarily friendly, but within the political arena there are several recent instances when pro-life and pro-choice forces have found themselves on common ground. The issue bringing (some might say "forcing") them together is family planning.

The best known instance occurred late last year when a new set of legislative restrictions proposed by Congressman Jack Kemp (R.-N.Y.) and Senator Orin Hatch (R.-Utah) threatened virtually all publicly funded family planning activities. At present, federal regulations prohibit such public funding to be used for abortions, and the regulations allow only "non-directive" counseling or referrals to those seeking abortions. Kemp-Hatch would have banned all counseling or referrals (whether done with public or private funds) and any organizational or contractual links between family planning agencies which receive public funds and institutions providing abortions. This absolute wall of separation between family planning and abortion could have paralyzed the family planning services of public health departments and clinics as well as private agencies like Planned Parenthood.

That proposal energized a large and vocal opposition, but even so, many of those lobbying the issue thought the first vote — in the House Appropriations Committee — might go either way. That it proved to be a major, 37-16, defeat for the eight-term Kemp, is credited to two Catholics with solid pro-life voting records who are also strongly pro-family planning: Silvio Conte (R.-Mass.) and Dick Durbin (D.-Ill.).

Conte made an extremely eloquent and effective speech on behalf of family planning. Durbin took another tack. On his own, he drafted an amendment to protect the family planning agencies. Initially he acted out of a concern that Kemp-Hatch might bring down malpractice suits on health professionals who withheld information about abortion from certain family planning clients. As clarified in Committee Report language, under the Durbin amendment a family planning agency would not be in violation of the law if "non-directive" counseling were given, on referral or request, for any legally available procedure, including abortion. It also included language from the original Kemp amendment, permitting abortion when the life of the mother was endangered.

Thus, the Durbin amendment presented an alternative for pro-life members who also support family planning. And so, for very different reasons some among the pro-life and pro-choice forces found themselves voting the same way. (Much later in the process Durbin agreed to drop his language, when Kemp agreed not to attach his original amendment to any other bill.)

Not long after the national vote, 133 Maryland state legislators on both sides of the abortion debate asked their governor to increase funding for family planning, family support, and adoption services. "We cannot let our divergent views [on abortion] obscure the other serious health and societal issues affecting young poor women of childbearing age," they said.

In Wisconsin, observers commented on the "unprecedented discovery by pro- and anti-abortion forces of common ground" in their recently passed Abortion Prevention and Family Responsibility Act of 1985. That law makes adults financially liable for babies born to their minor sons and daughters, imposes criminal penalties for late-term abortions, and provides funds for sex education for teenagers.

It's not that pro-life and pro-choice forces have come to a complete agreement on family planning; they haven't. To many family planning supportaers, 1985 was a particularly difficult year, and 1986 begins on shaky ground for their funding. But the reaction Representative Durbin got from his colleagues may be instructive. Committee members, including several that he barely knows, thanked him warmly for taking a stand that had to be taken, while giving them an intellectually defensible alternative to vote for. Over in the Senate, where even members of the "pro-life caucus" like Williams Proxmire (D.-Wis.) and Mark Hatfield (R.-Oreg.) found the notion of gutting family planning too extreme, Kemp-Hatch never came to a vote.

To members like Durbin, who are opposed to abortion but troubled by issues like teenage pregnancy, it's fundamentally irresponsible not to recognize the role that family planning can play. They are part of a growing breed of legislators, nationally and in state legislatures, who are both pro-life and pro-family planning.

Politically, however, Durbin has found that "it doesn't buy

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you much to take a less-than-one-hundred percent stand on this issue." For some pro-life groups, support for any form of contraception is anathema, while some of the pro-choice groups are equally adamant about anyone who is against abortion. For Durbin, his efforts have meant being vilified as a baby killer, being made an enemy "pin-up" in a right-to-life newsletter, and having a right-to-life opponent in the fall. For two of the Maryland legislature's "most fervent opponents of abortion," support of family planning resulted in attacks from the Family Protection Lobby, which accused them of the "wholesale sellout of our families and children." In their reply to the attacks, the Maryland legislators warned: "If you attempt to limit the anti-abortion movement to those who also oppose contraception, then you will only be bringing serious harm to the pro-life cause."

Durbin makes a similar argument. He thinks demands for opposition to family planning may defeat the purposes of those who oppose abortion. It's time they asked themselves, he says, to assess their impact on the abortion issue since *Roe v. Wade* became the law, given the fact that a generation has now grown up with abortion legal. Politically, he says, "we've failed." Equally willing to urge the other side to get "out of the abortion business," his desire is a simple one: "to get beyond labels, and down to something reasonable." Which, at least in part, may be another way of saying, "common ground."

NANCY AMIDEI

(Nancy Amidei frequently reports on human-services issues from Washington.)

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

ATTENDING TO TRADITION

IS EVERYTHING MERELY ACCIDENTAL?

RELIGIOUS TRADITION is controversial these days. Among the controversies is one which has yet to surface as clearly as it must, but which permeates the debate: it is the question of what we mean by religious tradition in the first place. People use words like "fundamentalist" and "orthodox" interchangeably, though they are far from equivalent, and there is a vague formula in some liberal minds which places on one side of a line (one drawn by editorialists who know almost nothing about religion of any sort) Jerry Falwell, Hindu traditionalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Orthodox Judaism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Anglo-Catholicism, and the pope. On the other side of the line are "progressive" religious people — that is to say, churchpeople who take a view of the world which looks very much like the one held by the editorialists who draw the line.

The history of religion provides progressive churchpeople with an embarrassing number of reasons to distrust traditional Christianity. In the ages when officially sanctioned views of Christianity were the only kind allowed, Jews and heretics (who had often become heretical because of the self-satisfaction and corruption of those who were officially Christian) were persecuted in the name of Christ.

Tradition has been abused and is still frequently invoked as a way of ending all thought and discussion. There is a real difficulty involved in distinguishing between tradition and traditions, between those things which are essential to Christian belief and those which can and should be discarded as irrelevant or even harmful. And there is a danger in easy discarding.

The idea that tradition involves something harmonious and complex, something which demands a special attention more than a reaction, is not a recent part of our ordinary way of reading Christian history. But it seems to me essential. It could reveal what is wrong both with fundamentalism and a certain sort of liberal Christianity. It might begin to refresh our appreciation of orthodoxy . . . not an orthodoxy which relies upon official pronouncements, which at best are reinforcements of something generally understood and should never be considered the source of truth. The orthodoxy I have in mind is one which has everything to do with attention to tradition as a living language informed by prayer.

A lot of the recent "traditionalist" vs. "progressive" debate has come down to a quarrel between those who are in favor of a strong hierarchical structure and those who are not, who favor instead a diversity of opinion and a more democratic church structure. With regard to this debate (in general it doesn't interest me much) I can say only that the purpose of any hierarchy is to represent the mind of the church, and that cannot be equated with the hierarchy talking to itself. Knowing the mind of the church does not involve a poll of the majority, including the majority of theologians; it also does not involve an invocation of the authority of office. Paul confronted Peter and called him wrong, and there were many disagreements between saints. Christian truth is harmonious, and may become clear only over the long haul. It is "what is handed on to us," as Paul said in telling his listeners about the Eucharist, and our faith is that the Holy Spirit is part of the process, even part of what happens during the disagreements between Augustine and Pelagius in the West, and the disagreements between those Orthodox monks who believed that monasteries should not own great estates and that heretics should not be persecuted, and those monks who opposed them. (This battle, between the "possessors" and the "non-possessors," ended in a short-term victory for those who favored what most of us would regard as the wrong side, and as a result the church suffered in the next century. Chalk one up for the long haul . . . but not before noting some of the important issues raised in the debate, such as the ability of monasteries which

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owned estates to care for the poor and orphaned who would otherwise have been neglected, and the fact that the leading figures on both sides of the debate were canonized.)

In saying that we need special attention rather than reaction, I do not mean that we should ignore the abuses which have been done in the name of tradition. They should be remembered, in the name of tradition, and any honest tradition includes them. What worries me is the self-conscious contemporary thinker who is embarrassed by the awkwardness of a tradition which includes currently unfashionable things, and who, in the name of bringing things up to date, refuses to entertain ideas which were powerful to our ancestors. There are forms of intellectual lock-step which make this look less problematic than it should.

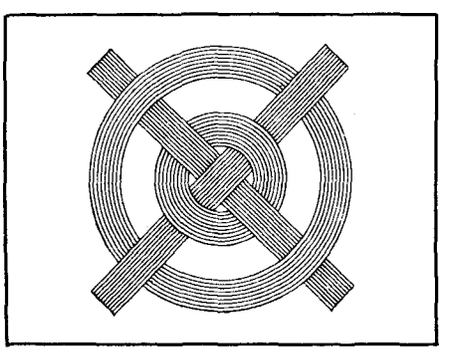
Take, for example, a current fashionable approach to the historicity of Christianity. Traditionally, Christians believed that Jews were the chosen people, that Jesus was born "in the fullness of time," and that the period of the patriarchs and prophets pointed towards his coming. The ways in which the church of the first centuries expressed the faith were influenced by Greek thinking; for example, the working out of the doctrine of the Trinity and the three persons of God, "one in essence and undivided," involved Greek rather than Jewish concepts of essence and person. But this was seen as providential, an expansion of what was revealed at the Epiphany: now God's Kingdom was to include the Gentiles, who themselves had something to contribute.

It is not as if this idea has been scientifically disproved, but a fear of triumphalism, cultural colonialism, and sexism has led to another approach, which at its extreme regards the Judaism of Jesus, his maleness, the time during which he entered the world, the formation of the creeds, and the dogmatic contribution of patristic thought, as more or less accidental. The principles of Jesus, the meaning of his life and teaching, matter more than the development of doctrine or the particular cultural and historical circumstances in which they occurred.

There is something healthy about this reaction to the self-satisfied Christianity of the imperial church, but there is also a real danger. Part of the danger lies in our own cultural limitations: we are inclined to think that we possess a clarity which our ancestors lacked. It is very easy to see what was wrong with their view of the world and how limited their intellectual horizons were, but not so easy to see how our own understanding is limited. The liberal temptation is to think that no fourth-century thinker could possibly be as clear about Christianity as we are today; the conservative temptation is to reject any twentieth-century thinker as obviously less impressive than the thinkers of the past.

The greater danger is that this line of thinking could make an abstraction of Christianity — that is, we are presumed to have the ability to see what really matters in the message of Jesus, and we are able then to extract it from its limited cultural and historical context. Not only does this presumed ability fail to take into account the limitations of our own vision; it doesn't take enough account of the mystery of the Incarnation. It sees only the limits of the past and the confining nature of culture (excepting the culture of the person who is doing the abstracting), and none of the depths. It pays attention to the fact that the Jews were tribal, but not to their chosenness. Granted, the chosenness of the Jews is controversial, among Jews as well as Christians. But the fact is that it is only during the last couple of centuries that it has been questioned by Christians or Jews, and it should bother us more than it does that we assume our ancestors to be wrong, and the thinkers of the Enlightenment correct.

I don't mean to say that the questions should not be asked at all, only that they should not be answered so easily against a traditional view and in favor of a more modern one. No one can deny that many foolish arguments have surrounded the maleness of Jesus, or that the chosenness of the Jews has been perversely used as an excuse for anti-Semitism, or that there were limitations to the vision of the Fathers of the church. But the historical time of Jesus' coming, the nature of the Judaism that was his preparation and his personal formation, the fortunate confluence of Jewish and Greek thought during the formative years of Christianity — these things cannot be taken as simple accidents. Those Christians who went before us didn't, and we should not presume a superior vision, as liberals are sometimes wont to do; nor should we presume an inferior one, as conservatives tend to.



Instead, we should pay as much attention as we can to what the whole of the tradition tells us, to all of the voices that have formed it. That this will lead to new appreciations and emphases is inevitable and good. What I think has to be avoided, though, is the treatment of the church as if it were only a sociological and cultural phenomenon, and not the Body of Christ, where the Holy Spirit lives.

If the Holy Spirit is alive in the church and has guided the development of doctrine, the lives of saints, and the sacramental participation of Christians in the life of Christ, our attention to tradition can never be detached or merely critical. To presume that we can, in our present condition, judge the whole of our tradition without having allowed it to inform us to the depths is profoundly arrogant. It looks strange and awkward to us, with all its odd costumes, old pictures, and a language which bears the marks of 2,000 years of shared experience. But one of the most important functions of tradition is to keep us from being trapped in the limited understanding of the present age. Our work is not to try to restore the church to what it was in the past or to restore a triumphalist Christian vision; but it is also not to judge the church as if the twentieth (rather than the fourth or thirteenth) were the greatest and wisest of centuries.

JOHN GARVEY

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Church/world watch

The Mideast: fashioning a U.S. policy

J. Bryan Hehir

THE U.S.-SOVIET relationship dominated foreign policy in 1985, culminating in the November summit in Geneva. But the year closed with one more violent reminder that the Middle East cannot be ignored. The terrorist attacks in the Rome and Vienna airports are not subject to logical analysis or rational restraint, but they point to the unresolved political issues of the Middle East. Those who carried the guns and grenades in the airports are not interested in conventional notions of a political settlement. But the absence of a stable political order — among states and within states — in the Middle East creates a stage where terrorists can perform and a shelter where they can hide.

One imperative for pursuing any possible political solution in the region is to deprive irrational forces the space to shape events in the Middle East. Denying them space is not sufficient; coercive measures are needed, but coercion devoid of a political framework simply escalates the spiral of violence in the region.

Pursuit of a political solution is universally praised, but the method of pursuit is vehemently disputed, particularly when it concerns the U.S. role. There are two views of what the United States can or should do in the Middle East. The dominant view flows from a description of the region provided by *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman on January 5, 1986: "If there is one ironclad rule of Middle Eastern politics, it is that when things are not moving forward they usually move backward." This proposition is then joined, not by Friedman but by others, to the recommendation that the United States should be vigorously involved in "moving things forward."

The alternative view is that U.S. activism is both undesirable and fated to fail. That position was expressed in 1985 by the experienced Arabist Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins in an article [*New York Times*, April 14, 1985] entitled, "For More Benign Neglect in the Mideast." Ajami contends that the United States is a catalyst of the wrong kind in the Middle East. U.S. initiatives will only spark fundamentalist Islamic reactions which will retard diplomatic activity and may threaten the governments seen to be allied with a U.S. effort. "For a year now," writes Ajami, "the United States has stayed out of trouble in the Middle East and the region has survived the consequences of its benign neglect. It's doubtful if the consequences of American activism would be so benign. The notion of our own indispensability is a trap. We should not walk into that trap when others set it for us."

Neither perspective is wholly convincing, but the tension between them cuts through many problems of U.S. foreign policy. The first view stresses the potential of U.S. action in the Middle East. It arises from the conviction that the regional powers either will not or cannot move toward a stable solution, and that the cost, to both the region and the United States, is too high to acquiesce to Friedman's iron law and its dire consequences. The second view stresses the narrow range of possibility for U.S. action, the complexity of cultural, religious, and local forces which the activist conception either ignores or discounts. While this global vs. regional tension can be found in many policy questions, it is particularly intense in the Middle East because no one doubts that war in the region is of global significance.

These two views of the U.S. role will be tested in 1986. As the year begins, three elements of the factual situation in the Middle East seem clear. First, there is little diplomatic progress in spite of some interesting diplomatic activity by King Hussein. His reestablishment of the Jordanian-PLO link, and his limited rapproachment with Syrian President Assad are valiant attempts "to move things forward." But Hussein can't act effectively in a diplomatic vacuum. Without U.S. and Israeli responses, he risks overextending himself in the region and even in his own country.

Second, time is not on the side of peace: in Israel Mr. Peres faces the deadline of yielding the Prime Ministry to the Likud; in Lebanon the new internal peace accord has yet to take hold, and U.N. troops may be leaving Southern Lebanon within the year, creating a vacuum which the Israelis may decide to fill; in Egypt lack of regional progress simply intensifies the internal strains of Egyptian political and economic life.

Third, the United States seems devoid of a consistent perspective or policy on the region. There is much activity at the second level of government (Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy) and occasional statements by the president, but these have not provided a sense of policy direction.

It is easier to criticize the absence of policy than to construct one. But a first step is to respond to Ajami's contention that neglect is the best policy. I am impressed by Ajami's caution but not his conclusion. Policy steps should not be taken without detailed awareness of the regional and local complexities which Ajami knows so well. But the United States is too tied to the Middle East (with Israel, with the Gulf, with Muburak and King Hussein) to sustain a posture of benign neglect. The consequences ultimately will be malevolent.

But what kind of engagement is required? Some wisdom comes from one of the most experienced and sober Middle East analysts in the United States, Harold Saunders. Saunders dealt with the Middle East for twenty years in sev-

(Continued on page 58)

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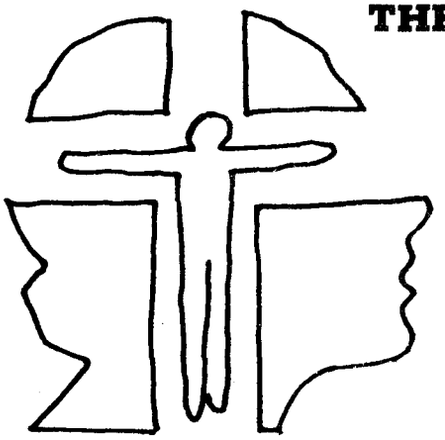

The return of 'mystery'

ROBERT IMBELLI

"IT IS ALSO a function of hospitality to draw boundaries." This remark of Maryknoll's co-founder, Bishop James A. Walsh, applies as much to linguistic as to institutional hospitality. It also suggests an approach to the achievement of the recently concluded extraordinary synod. For the synod's two documents — its "Final Report" and its "Message to the People of God" — outline some "boundary conditions" for correctly speaking the distinctive language of Catholic Christianity.

This "drawing of boundaries" need not indicate any inhospitality to the contribution other languages may make, nor any retrenchment from the *aggiornamento* mandated by the Second Vatican Council (an *aggiornamento* explicitly endorsed by the synod). Its goal is to promote, rather, a rich and complex dialogue that respects the distinctive identity and autonomy of the participants. In its "Report," the synod insists that, "An easy accommodation that could lead to the secularization of the church is to be avoided. Also excluded is an immobile closing in upon itself of the community of the faithful. What is affirmed is a missionary openness for the integral salvation of the world" (Part II, D, 3). The boundaries exist, then, not to insulate, but to indicate a distinctive orientation and direction. The synod's accomplishment consists in providing something of a grammar for the discernment of Catholic identity.

The synod's exercise of discernment was occasioned by the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II. The Second Vatican Council itself remains the decisive ecclesial event of our century, enthusiastically celebrated by the synod as "a grace of God and a gift of the Holy Spirit" (cf. I, 2). The very summoning of the synod to commemorate the council could not but underscore the council's surpassing importance. And had the synod done no more than appeal authoritatively to new and deeper reflection upon the documents of Vatican II, especially the four "Constitutions" which are the pillars of the conciliar edifice (those on the church, the liturgy, revelation, and the church in the modern world), it would have been a salutary re-affirmation that Vatican II "remains the *Magna Carta* for the future" (II, D, 7).

But the synod achieved much more. For a "pastoral" council (as Vatican II was intended to be) requires an ongoing pastoral reflection. A council concerned with reading the "signs of the times" invites the church to a continuing process of discernment. Indeed, not a few claim that the "modern world" of 1965 is already entering a "post-modern" phase. The synod thus appears as both the fruit of the council and its authoritative interpreter. If the Second Vatican Council may be likened to a superb volume, rich in detail, its very profusion risks that selective renditions will be bruited about as the true tale of the council. The synod now provides a "preface" to Vatican II that is at once invitation and clarification: a preface structured about the council's four constitutions.

Let me underline this crucial rule for the interpretation of the council that the synod offers: the four Constitutions must be read together as interrelated and mutually illuminating. Unless this is done, some will simply reduce Vatican II to what had already been articulated in Vatican I and Trent; while others will hasten to dissolve Vatican II into self-proclaimed "post-Vatican II models." The synod calls for a comprehensive reading of Vatican II, a respecting of its full canon. It thereby challenges the advocates of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *(Gaudium et Spes)* to root the

FOLLOWING THE completion of last year's extraordinary synod, *Commonweal* invited four distinguished theologians to discuss what they believe are "the main tasks of Roman Catholic theology in the post-synodal period." Each of the four articles that follows represents a distinct perspective. The significance of the synod is apparent in each, yet for different and very challenging reasons. We are honored to present them in this year's "Contemporary Theology Issue." THE EDITORS

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mission they undertake in the vision that finds expression in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *(Lumen Gentium)*. And it equally demands of the defenders of the latter that their vision open upon the mission urged in *Gaudium et Spes*.

Moreover, in light of the struggle which occurred in the aftermath of the council between the partisans of chapter two of *Lumen Gentium* (on the church as people of God) and the proponents of chapter three (on the church's hierarchical structure), the synod forcefully recalls that the matrix of both lies in chapter one which proclaims and celebrates the *mystery* of the church.

Given the seemingly irresistible urge, especially among the press, to read matters in exclusively conflictual terms and then to adopt relatively facile labels to pin on the "antagonists," it may be useful to linger here briefly. Reports from Rome during the synod tended to associate the concept of "mystery" with those deemed "conservative," and to view the concept of "communion" as the watchword of the "liberals." Without denying the obvious abuse to which any notion may be subjected, it seems imperative to remember that the mystery which *Lumen Gentium* invokes is precisely the *mystery of communion*: the very life of the triune God mediated to the church through Jesus Christ. It is none other than this mystery of communion that the Constitution on Revelation *(Dei Verbum)* so vigorously proclaims when it introduces its entire consideration of revelation with a quotation from the First Letter of John: "We announce to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have communion with us; and our communion is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." Any appeal to "mystery" must not be a cover for mystification; for the mystery is concretely incarnate in a person who bears a unique name: Jesus the Christ.

In this respect also the synod appears providential. I had been amazed, in perusing numberless pre-synodal articles, at the almost total absence of reference to Christ in the many expectations advanced and programs proposed. Management, not mystery, seemed the order of the day. So narrowed had the discussion become that the synod's simple reminder, that the "light of the nations" (the title of the Constitution on the Church) does not refer to the church at all but to Christ, resounds as an almost revolutionary confession. The church itself is a reflected mystery, deriving its origin and significance uniquely from Christ. It doubtless assumes different sociological forms, but its identity is theological (cf. II, A, 2).

Thus I found an editorial comment by the London *Tablet* at the synod's conclusion both disarming and refreshing. "The extraordinary synod which has just concluded its work gave Catholics a shock. They had thought they knew what Vatican II meant: perhaps they did not. They must set out again to find out." May I suggest something of what we must "find out" by drawing upon the thought of Friedrich von Hügel. Von Hügel held that there are three interrelated aspects of religion which are indispensable, complementary, yet each individually totalitarian in tendency: the institutional, the critical, and the mystical. A creative tension ("friction" is his preferred word) among them is required for religion's well-being. I believe that the synod has once more brought to the fore the mystical element of Catholic Christianity. Though this mystical element was doubtless present in the Second Vatican Council's work, much of the subsequent interpretation and implementation of the council was neglectful of it and concentrated upon the critical and institutional.

To my mind, the synod's stress on "mystery" and its focus upon the trinitarian and Christocentric character of church corrects an imbalance. Though the emphasis on the mystical, if it becomes exclusive, can itself lead to one-sidedness, in the present situation it not only stimulates a needed deepening in our reception of the council, but also provides the proper perspective from which institutional reform and critical reflection must proceed.

FROM THIS VANTAGE, what are the main tasks of Catholic theology in a post-synod church? Though theology is far too important an ecclesial activity to be left to "professional" theologians, such professional theologians do exercise a vital function within the Catholic community. Hence some considerations of the Anglican theologian, Stephen Sykes, in his important recent book, *The Identity of Christianity* (Fortress, 1984), may serve as apt prelude to a more programmatic reply. Sykes, firstly, cautions against the illusion that questions of method hold an "absolute priority" in theology, and cautions against the peculiar temptation to an "infinite methodological regression." At a time when the seat of the professional theological enterprise in North America is shifting from seminary to university and is taking on a more academic allure, Sykes's common sense reminder may be in order: "Christianity is a religion, not a philosophical system . . . one does not participate in Christianity by discussing its methodological problems."

Secondly, Sykes offers some apposite reflections on the power which accrues to professional theologians by dint of their "superior articulacy." He does not denounce this power, but insists upon its acknowledgment (in face of tendencies to deny or deprecate it); and enjoins to it the responsibility such power entails. A prime responsibility regards the contribution of theological reflection to clarifying and maintaining Christian identity. Academic pretenses to the contrary notwithstanding, theologians' efforts do not transpire in some neutral intellectual realm far removed from the nitty-gritty of ecclesial existence. Nor should theologians be permitted to preen themselves as an innovative vanguard, with little concern for the continuity of the community of faith. In principle, the fruitful tension between bishops and theologians is considerably enhanced when both recognize in each other an overarching commitment to Catholic identity (placing the institutional and the critical self-consciously at the service of the mystical). It might be even further enhanced if both humbly admitted the recurrent temptation to a tyrannous abuse of power, whether institutional or *(mirabile dictu)* intellectual.

Finally, Sykes accurately locates the prime context for the celebration of a comprehensive Christian identity within the activity of worship. Here, in effect, the institutional, critical,

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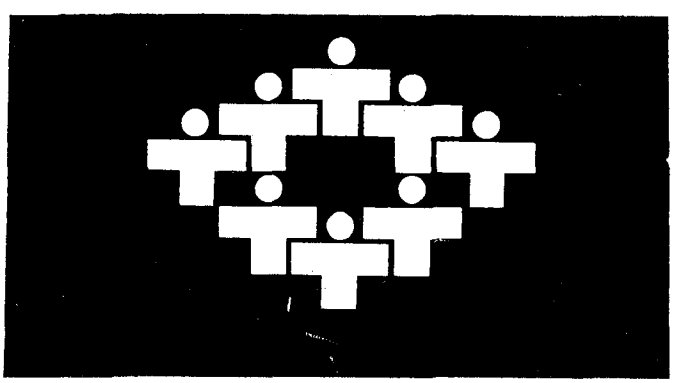
and mystical elements of Christian identity come together in the community's celebration and re-presentation of the paschal mystery of its Lord. In liturgy Christian identity is not merely proclaimed or analyzed, but publicly performed. Here enacted expression guides and nurtures the emergence of a distinctively Catholic experience and identity — for bishop, theologian, and lay person alike.

In the current theological and pastoral context, I carry away from Sykes's closely argued work a renewed conviction that Catholic theology must cultivate a "hermeneutics of trust" in the tradition and in its transformative power. Such trust certainly does not imply uncritical credulity nor nostalgic archaism. But trust in the tradition counters a prevalent tendency to canonize present experience, and counteracts the disintegrative acid of universal suspicion. A hermeneutics of trust recognizes that the tradition is where we begin: we are its heirs as well as its continuers.

The trust I am recommending is not placed, in the first instance, in institutions or ideologies, but in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the tradition's truth and norm. My own persuasion finds support in John Coulson's splendid study, *Newman and the Common Tradition* (Clarendon/Oxford, 1970): "[For Newman] when it is a matter of religious assent, we must trust persons and not logic. . . . Our assent is verified not by logical criteria, therefore, but by our acts and within the actions of the worshiping community. It is above all an assent to a personal question: 'What think ye of Christ?' — and in making this response to a person, we learn that our response to his church must be of the same kind, as being a response to a personal unity. . . ." If Vatican II itself, in so many ways, brought the pioneering efforts of Newman to their fruition, the extraordinary synod has made its own the council's Newmanian sensitivities.

IN THE SPIRIT of the above remarks, let me indicate some of the more specific tasks I deem incumbent upon Catholic theology in a post-synod church. I can be brief, since the substance is already present in the foregoing. The christological task remains primary: a presentation of the Catholic vision of Christ which is both esthetically attractive and theologically compelling, a vision that arises from worship and leads to worship. Fra Angelico's avowal — "Whoever would paint Christ must live with Christ" — pertains, whether the medium of the portrait be colors or words.



Of course, such living with Christ must transpire within the world of the late twentieth century, not the medieval cloister. Might I hazard the belief, then, that a contemporary depiction of Christ will include a new vision of the transfiguration, in which Christ is portrayed with Buddha on one side and Mohammed on the other? Despite this broadening of horizon, the conversation on the mount of transfiguration will remain, as in Luke's account: "the exodus which Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). For the death and resurrection of Jesus provides the definitive revelation of the depths of transformation and communion to which God calls all peoples. Such is the unique good news which Christians can bring to interreligious dialogue: the gospel of redemption from sin and death.

A further task theology must pursue is that of fostering in the church a new Christ-mysticism. Every genuine renewal of the church has been animated by a new realization of the presence and power of Christ — whether by Benedict or Francis, Ignatius or Teresa, Vincent de Paul or Charles de Foucauld. Whatever else such mysticism entails, it is marked by a transforming and affective love for Jesus Christ and a vivid sense of the presence of Christ in the other, especially the poor. One of Karl Rahner's last gifts to his fellow believers, the mature simplification of a life's journey, is his little book, *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbor* (Crossroad, 1983). Here the redoubtable Rahner, master of transcendental method, attests with tender simplicity: "You are only really dealing with Jesus when you throw your arms around him and realize right down to the bottom of your being that this is something you can still do today." It is not the idea of Jesus, nor the memory of Jesus, nor the cause of Jesus which saves. It is the person who lived and was crucified and is risen who is the Savior of the world.

If the task of promoting a contemporary Christ-mysticism appears more the province of spirituality than of theology, a sign of hope in the post-synod church lies precisely in transcending this too facile dichotomy. Rahner's entire labor represents a sustained effort to foster a new integration of theology and spirituality. And the project of his fellow Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan, which posits reflection on conversion as theology's foundational task, already overcomes the separation in principle. Moreover, for Lonergan, the conversion in question goes beyond the moral to embrace (or, better, to surrender to) the mystical. At stake, as the mystical tradition testifies, is far more than a new social or political situation; it is the birth of a new self, transformed according to the image of Christ.

A final task set by the synod is a reinvigorated ecclesiology, whose guiding motif is the church as mystery of communion. On the one hand, such as ecclesiology must link the mystery of the church more intimately to the paschal mystery of Christ, which alone can effect communion in the Spirit. On the other hand, it must relate the church more closely to the life and salvation of the world. The church is not yet the Kingdom; but it is already the sacrament of the Kingdom, through which the Kingdom, realized in Christ, is made present in hope.

Hence the church is not merely functional to the world: not merely the servant of salvation independently present. Church

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has a substance of its own: "a life hid with Christ in God." But it cannot truly be the church of Christ unless it also subserves the salvation of the world: "for the love of Christ impels it." Communion indicates, then, both the substance of the church and the shape of salvation. Thus the synod, following *Lumen Gentium*, teaches that in Christ the church is sacrament, that is, sign and instrument of communion with God and also of communion and reconciliation of people with one another (cf. II, A, 2). If the church is sacrament only *in Christ*, as the body, the making visible of Christ, its transforming mission, inspired by the Spirit, is to recapitulate all things in Christ.

Crucial to such an ecclesial vision is a more nuanced consideration of the relation between Gospel and culture, church and society; between redemption and emancipation, the mystical and political. What, prior to Vatican II, often seemed sundered, has, in the twenty years since the council, become at times rhetorically fused. Urgently needed is a differentiated integration. "All things" must indeed be recapitulated; but each accorded its proper place. All things contribute to the communion of the Spirit; but not all do so in the same way or with equal directness.

In the search for an integral vision, the synod offers valuable guidelines, stressing the distinction, not the separation of the two orders (cf. II, D, 6); and lifting up the paschal mystery as central to a definition of the comprehensive Christian understanding of salvation (cf. II, D, 2). Once more the mystical element comes to the fore: God's grace ever precedes and enables human response. Consequently, a distinctively Christian ethic can only proceed from eucharistic celebration: empowering a praxis which follows Christ rather than absolutizes a cause. Only within a eucharistic setting does secular service become social ministry.

Peter Steinfels, commenting in these pages upon the significance of the synod, concluded his "Sober Look at the Synod" [December 20, 1985] somewhat somberly. "Perhaps," he muses, "the synod we need is the one we would hold in our own hearts." Without disputing the desirability of such an "interior" synod, if it is not to remain tongue-tied or lapse into the purely individualistic, then it must, surely, draw upon what the extraordinary synod has provided: a comprehensive language wherewith to form those habits of the heart which bespeak communal Catholic identity.

THEOLOGY AFTER THE SYNOD: ACKNOWLEDGING WOMEN

'So far, so bad . . .'

ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA

DURING THE holidays I started to study the official synodal documents in preparation for this article. I became increasingly "blocked." According to the synodal pronouncements, the main task for Catholic theology seems to be the study and exegesis of the documents of Vatican II and the explication of the forthcoming universal catechism. How boring — to use a favored expression of my daughter, Chris, who is twelve.

But Chris also had some words of advice: "When I have a difficult assignment I always write and rewrite the topic sentence. If you get the topic sentence right the rest will flow from it." It was obvious, I needed a new topic sentence. First, I tried the headline "So far, so good, so what?" from the report on the synod in *Commonweal* [December 20], but I quickly realized that I had to change it to: "So far, so bad. . . ." The reasons for this change are obvious. The synod had been a visual demonstration of the patriarchal church or, in the words of the "Holy Father," an "act of ecclesi(astic)al fraternity." Moreover, the pronouncements of cardinals arguing that women cannot be ordained because Christ was a man had become theologically embarrassing.

Since Catholics in North America saw the "women question" as one of the major issues to be addressed by the synod, bishops sought to scale down such expectations in the pre-synodal period. Cardinal G. Emmett Carter of Toronto, for example, spoke in a pastoral letter under the subheading "The Church 'Ad Extra' " about "the vexatious subject of the role of women in the church," and made clear that he did "not subscribe to the sometimes shrill clamor that women are second-class citizens in the church." According to the cardinal, women need to feel that they are wanted and that their gifts are "put to good use." "Some attention along these lines by the extraordinary synod would do much to calm the present unrest. The majority of Catholic women are very happy in their allegiance."

When speaking of problems which have affected negatively Catholic life in the past twenty years in the United States,

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Bishop Malone, the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated: "I think of such things as . . . confusion about sexual morality, widespread breakdown of marriage and family, and the emergence of aggressive, secularized feminism." Representatives of Women-Church Convergence protested at the annual meeting of NCCB against this attempt to lay the blame on women: A report in *Probe*, the newspaper of the National Assembly of Religious Women, stated, "Women are becoming for the bishops, the scapegoat that secular humanism is for the religious right. Women are, as they have ever been since Eve, described as the problem." Those of us who had believed that some of the bishops had heard our call to conversion from patriarchal sexism realized that we were again betrayed in the name of "fraternal unity." Nothing had changed.

Without question the synod was a splendid manifestation of patriarchal church. Not only were there — as was to be expected — no Catholic women members of the extraordinary synod, but we were also absent from the ten ecumenical observers. Not just the Roman Catholic but the whole Christian church was represented solely by men. Why couldn't the other Christian churches send women priests, bishops, ministers, and preachers to make up what the Roman church is lacking in catholicity and universality?

Not surprisingly, the evil of patriarchal sexism was never mentioned. The bishops' "Message to the People of God" (Part IV) has a formidable list of the "ills of the world": "lack of respect for human life, the suppression of civil and religious liberties, contempt for the rights of families, racial discrimination, economic imbalance, insurmountable debts and the problems of international security, and the race for more powerful and terrible arms." But it does not mention patriarchal sexism as the cause for the dehumanization of half the world's population.

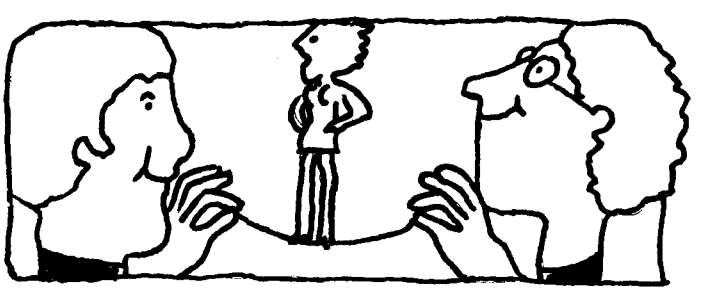
Although the final synod report does not link secularism with feminism, it treats the "vexatious subject" of women in the church under the heading "Participation and Co-Responsibility in the Church" on "all levels": "May the church [i.e. patriarchal hierarchy?] do its utmost so that they [women] might be able to express, in the service of the church, their own gifts and to play a greater part in the various fields of the church's apostolate" (Part II, C, 6). Curiously, women are declared to be a separate group constituting a distinct level of the church, since we are mentioned after the collaboration of bishops and priests, deacons and religious, clergy and laity. Surely the synod did not want to say that we are fifth-class rather than second-class citizens! "So far, so bad. . . ."

The year changed from 1985 to 1986 and I still had not found a topic sentence. Chris advised me to look for key-words or key-paragraphs. Even a cursory reading of the synodal statements indicates that such a key-word is "mystery." Since we both are fans of "Murder She Wrote," I was tempted to select a topic sentence like "Post-synodal Roman Catholic Theologians Must Become Mystery Writers" producing headlines such as "Synod Releases Mystery Story: No Corpse Found!"

This topic sentence, however, was not feasible because I knew of too many "casualties." Theologians such as Leonardo Boff are still silenced or threatened with loss of their teaching jobs; feminist nuns are asked to acquiesce or be expelled from their religious communities; divorced and remarried Catholics are barred from the sacraments; teenagers become pregnant and are expelled from Catholic schools, because Catholic schools do not teach responsible and effective birth control; bishops such as Thomas Gumbleton or P. Francis Murphy are not rewarded for their ecclesial leadership while others have become cardinals despite their support for the Reagan government which is responsible for increasing poverty and militarism. If Catholic theology in the post-synodal period should serve the whole church and not just those "in secular or spiritual power," its main task will be the defense of its intellectual freedom and ecclesial integrity.

The final report of the synod witnesses "an increase in hunger, oppression, injustice and war, sufferings, terrorism and other forms of violence of every sort." But rather than reflecting on the causes of such injustice and violence and the church's participation in them, it advocates a theology of suffering and the cross: "It seems to us that in the present-day difficulties God wishes to teach us more deeply the value, the importance, and the centrality of the cross of Jesus Christ" (cf. II, D, 2). I had an old dogmatics teacher who used to warn us: "Never use the word mystery! Whenever a theologian uses the word mystery he [and he said he] has something to hide. Mystery theology is bad theology!" When "mystery" is used in place of theological argument, I couldn't agree more.

IT SEEMS to me, however, that the second theme proposed by the synod "the church as *koinonia*/communion" (cf. II, C) is pregnant with possibilities for Catholic theology and ecclesiology in the post-synodal period. However, it needs to be better translated and understood. In a study on *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Fortress, 1980), J.P. Sampley has shown that *koinonia* is a legal Greco-Roman term and was used as such by St. Paul. It is best translated as shared partnership and commitment. Such consensual partnership is operative as long as the partners are of the "same mind" about the purpose and commitment upon which the partnership was founded in the first place. The common purpose and commitment of all Christians is, according to the synod, the witness to "the mystery of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit." This is spelled out, for example, as "The child (son) of God became human (man) in order to make people (men) children



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of God. Through this familiarity with God, persons (men) are raised to a most high dignity. Therefore when the church preaches Christ we (she) announce salvation to everyone (mankind) (cf. II, A, 2). Catholic theology and episcopal teaching has to clarify whether my inclusive translation is justified or not. Does the "salvific love of God for the world" include women? Have Christian women entered this consensual partnership with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the church for the salvation/wellbeing of everyone? Not aggressive secular but *ecclesial* feminism raises the most difficult theological issues for the patriarchal hierarchy.

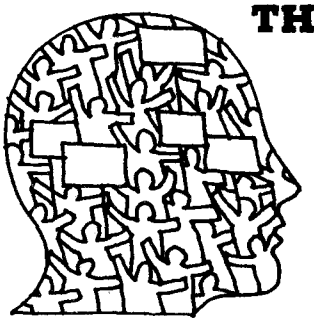
In a remarkable statement the synod's report rejects a "purely hierarchical understanding of the church" but warns: "We cannot replace a false unilateral vision of the church as purely hierarchical with a new sociological conception which is also unilateral" (cf. II, A, 3). Instead it advocates an ecclesiology of *koinonia* as the "foundation for order in the church." This ecclesiology provides the sacramental foundation for collegiality and co-responsibility, ecumenical partnership and mission to the world, especially "in the service of the poor, the oppressed and the outcast" (cf. II, D, 6), the majority of whom are women and children dependent on women.

In conclusion, I would like to make two practical suggestions: First, as long as the collegium of bishops is restricted to men, the collegium of cardinals should become restricted to women. Since the collegium of cardinals does not go back to Jesus nor stand in apostolic succession nor require ordination, no presumed theological obstacle would stand in the way of such a suggestion. The next synod or council of the Catholic church would then be able to live and model *koinonia*, consensual partnership, on an international and ecumenical level. In an article in *Probe*, "We Are Catholics and We Are Feminists," Mary Congo, Marge Goodwin, and Maureen Smith have provided the theological symbology for the self-understanding of women-cardinals electing the next pope:

> What must we do to change this institution which betrays woman who has served so faithfully? Should we wear some sign, some signal that says, "I am woman — And what my sister endures, I, too, endure"? . . . Perhaps we should wear . . . red. . . . Red to acknowledge courage. Red to acknowledge that we are angry. Red to acknowledge that we are passionate. Red to acknowledge that we are sexual, and, like our sisters of herstory, are still officially barred from the sanctuary because we menstruate. Red to acknowledge the blood that flows from us with each birth, with each abortion, with each battering, and with each assault . . . Let us cloak ourselves in solidarity with our sisters who are in pain. Then we could wear our red . . . speak the unspeakable, and take our place in the sanctuary. Then we could wear our red . . . and proclaim: It is OUR church. WE are Church. And we will NOT disappear.

Second, the synod declares "reciprocal dialogue between bishops and theologians" as necessary "for the building up of the faith and its deeper comprehension" (cf. II, B, 3). Such a permanent reciprocal dialogue between bishops and feminist theologians ought to be instituted on a national and international level in order to foster a deeper comprehension of the church as a discipleship of equals in consensual partnership, in order to acknowledge women as ecclesial and theological subjects in the post-synodal period.

THEOLOGY AFTER THE SYNOD: BEYOND CULTURE



Chorus of the hemispheres

MATTHEW L. LAMB

THE SYNOD was another manifestation of the profound changes and challenges occurring within both the church and the world. I shall attempt to trace these, sketching a few of the tasks they pose for Catholic practice and theology.

FATHER MATTHEW L. LAMB *is a priest of the archdiocese of Milwaukee and associate professor of systematic theology at Boston College. His most recent book is* Solidarity with Victims: Towards a Theology of Social Transformation *(Crossroad).*

Stated boldly and rather oversimply, the Catholic church is the only cohesive international institution with millions upon millions of active members in the first, second, and third worlds. As the second millennium of our Common Era draws to a close, there seems to be no other institutional framework — whether economic, political, educational, or religious — which is simultaneously so firmly rooted in local communities and neighborhoods, while also having such extensive global networks of cooperation and authority. If, as Karl Rahner stated, Vatican II expressed a shift from a predominantly Eurocentric church to a truly world church, then the synod was a clear indication of how irreversible that shift has become.

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European and North American Catholics no longer constitute the majority of the faithful, as they did in 1900 when they made up over 70 percent of the world's Catholics. By the year 2000 over 70 percent of Catholics will be living in the so-called third-world countries of the Southern Hemisphere. Africa, Latin America, and Asia are no longer simple missionary appendages to an otherwise European or Western church. Their ongoing appropriations of the Gospel and Catholic traditions reflect a dramatic pluralism of cultures and histories, challenging those tendencies to identify the Gospel and Catholicism with Western and European cultural histories.

These rather massive developments within Catholicism over the past century were not the result of any well-thought-out plan or theology. In some ways they were foreshadowed in the previous century by the spread of Catholicism in Canada and the United States. Catholic faith and spirituality simply refuse to remain bogged down in the limitations and defenses of their European histories. Those histories are not denied or rejected; far from it. Celebration of the many previous generations of the faithful is as integral to Catholic faith and spirituality as the cemeteries enfolding old village churches. Neither denial nor rejection of the past is appropriate. Instead, there is developing a discernment which seeks to foster the good and repent of the evil in the two thousand years of Roman Catholic history.

This shift toward a world church is occurring at a time when the very survival of humankind on this planet requires radical transformation. The synodal documents express this sense of crisis. They advert to economic, racial, political, and religious oppression; to "insurmountable debts"; and, overshadowing all, to "the race for more powerful and terrible arms." In the midst of this suffering and crisis, however, the synod affirms a profoundly human and Catholic conviction about the intrinsic goodness of creation and redemption:

> We are not made for death but for life. We are not condemned to divisions and wars, but called to fraternity and peace. God did not create humankind for hate and distrust. . . . For there is a path — and we already see signs of it — which leads to a civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love; to the only civilization worthy of humanity. We propose to work with all of you toward the realization of this civilization of love, which is God's design for humanity as it awaits the coming of the Lord (A Message to the People of God, IV).

Catholic popes and bishops decry abuses of human and civil rights, make their own the language of political freedoms and solidarity with the poor and oppressed, and collaborate to bring about a civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love. Enlightenment thinkers and activists, from Locke and Hume through Voltaire and Comte to Kant, Hegel, and Marx, would find such behavior on the part of the authorities of the West's oldest institution beyond belief. Something is happening, and theology has a lot of catching up to do.

The shift from a Eurocentric to a world church coincides with the beginning of the end of the cultural dominance of the modern Western Enlightenment. In a sense, Europe, in the last four centuries, has given humankind four invaluable, yet ambiguous, legacies, three of which constitute the core of the modern Enlightenment: modern exchange economies, modern sciences and technologies, and modern systems of political democracy. The fourth legacy from Europe is, of course, much older: Western Christianity, with its antagonisms between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Catholics were always, as Johannes Metz states, slow learners in the school of modernity. Indeed, European Catholicism was heavily identified with counter-Enlightenment and counter-modernity, just as it had been counter-Reformation, a church of second thoughts at best and repressive intolerance at worst. It doubted that exchange economies could be just and moral, so it condemned usury for centuries. It felt threatened enough by the emerging empirical sciences to condemn Galileo. As for modern secular democracies, they often were mildly (freedom *of* religion) or militantly (freedom *from* religion) secularist, depending on the extent to which religious authorities were identified with the repressive regimes against which they revolted. Modern atheism, it should be remembered, is European, and is more political than metaphysical in origin.

The cultural dominance of the modern Western Enlightenment is waning precisely because its legacies are now so taken for granted in a variety of cultural milieus. Exchange economies, whether capitalist or socialist, cover the globe, and few are arguing for a return to pre-modern barter systems. Empirical sciences and technologies have taken root in the most diverse cultures and educational environments. All governments pay at least lip-service to democratic ideals.

Simultaneously, however, these legacies are becoming differentiated from the cultural dominance of modernity, insofar as they are no longer cast in Western ideologies of automatic progress. If modernity began with the promise of unlimited growth through industrial exchange economies, it has begun to end with the mounting realization of widespread ecological crises and the physical impossibility of extending modern Western standards of living throughout the globe. If modernity began with the promise of science and technology to assure the progressive enhancement of human life on earth, it has begun to end in the horrors of modern scientific warfare and technological mass death. Never before in human history have humans slaughtered so many millions of their fellows as in our modern, Western, and enlightened twentieth century. Never before have governments spent so lavishly for the discovery and production of ever more destructive weapons. And if modernity began with the promise of political freedoms within independent sovereign nation states, it has begun to end as some sovereign nations armed themselves into superpowers, carrying on the old game of empire-building under the new rules of protecting spheres of influence.

With modern weapons of mass destruction poised throughout the Northern Hemisphere, with so many intellectual and financial resources spent in weapons research and production, with increasing disparities between the wealthy and the poor, and with third-world starvation juxtaposed to first-world obes-

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ity, the synod's call for collaboration towards a "civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love" seems eminently sane, rational, and hopeful. But if the call is not to become an echo in the wilderness, Catholic practice and theology must be profoundly renewed and transformed.

Ecclesially, the church must genuinely institutionalize the *diakonia* and *communion* of which the synod speaks. The church can collaborate in bringing about a civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love only if it fosters millions of communities of worship, justice, love, and responsible freedom within its own communion. A genuine and widespread conversion of hearts and minds, a deepening of genuine faith and prayer, is foundational to such a renewal. The living God is hardly Eurocentric! (I recall a wise monk, Jean Leclercq, shocking the Knights of Malta by reminding them that in global terms the Mediterranean is only a puddle.) Neither is the living God a class oppressor, a racist, a sexist, a militarist, nor an industrial polluter.

Also foundational to such a renewed church are what the late Bernard Lonergan called the processes of intellectual and moral conversion. For the tasks of theology today are enormous. What is required is nothing less than the collaboration of Catholic theology in a radically new, global process of polycentric enlightenment and transformation. The end of the cultural dominance of the modern Western Enlightenment means, in effect, that its secularism is being unmasked as dominative and oppressive, in ways analogous to critiques of pre-modern ecclesiastical authoritarianism.

The Final Report of the synod recognizes this when it speaks of a growing disenchantment with secularism and the signs of a return to the sacred. What the synod does not mention, and what Catholic theologians must elaborate in careful detail, is how these signs of return to the sacred must avoid repeating the sins of pre-modern sacralism (the use of religious categories to legitimate domination) or modern secularism (the use of secular categories to legitimate domination). There is a great danger, so evident in the various forms of religious fundamentalism around the globe, that the post-modern development of new forms of culture and civilization will reject wholesale the hard-won lessons of modernity. Will post-modernity become an anti-modernity, rejecting those lessons, the way modernity rejected the hard-won insights of its own past?

Rather than rejection and denial, only dialectical discernment is radical enough to contribute towards a genuine civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love. The modern Western Enlightenment tended to identify domination with established sacralist churches, ignoring or denying the sacred in the process. The consequence was a truncated, half-hearted enlightenment in which economy became severed from morality, science from wisdom, and politics from friendship and justice.

To discern and foster the genuine values of exchange economies, of empirical sciences and technologies, of democracies, requires a genuinely radical critique of domination, and the fear and violence upon which domination feeds. Will ecumenism and the dialogue of world religions become a proleptic paradigm for international relations in the future?

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Can we have exchange economies, empirical sciences and technologies, and political democracies without domination? The world religions can lead the way by practicing religious faith, hope, and love without domination.

Of all the world religions, Judaism and Catholic Christianity have perhaps the longest memories of empires and domination. The revelations of God in Judaism and in Christianity are revelations of the Divine Mystery choosing the poor and the downtrodden, the victims rather than the victors of history. If the European wars of religion sealed the bankruptcy of a decadent Christendom and ushered in the modern Western Enlightenment, the Holocaust in Europe sealed the fate of a truncated modern secularist Enlightenment. Will the memories of those terrible, unspeakable sufferings empower us, as they do Elie Wiesel, to speak truth to power? Will the specter of possible nuclear winters obliterating any future for humankind on this planet finally lead us to realize how, as Aquinas said, the highest manifestation of power is compassion and not force? Will faith as a knowledge born of love, as Lonergan so accurately defined it, heal our minds and hearts of the deep-seated propensity to rationalize domination? Will this healing extend also to our educational systems, thereby avoiding tendencies to promote knowledge engendered by fear, perverting truth by force?

A first step, as the U.S. Catholic bishops indicated in their peace pastoral and the second draft of the economics pastoral, is repentance. The Catholic church in the United States is uniquely and providentially situated to contribute immensely toward both the ecclesial shift from a Eurocentric to a world church, as well as to contribute to the transition from the modern Western Enlightenment towards a new civilization of sharing, solidarity, and love. Roman Catholicism in the United States has had several centuries of experiencing and appropriating the Gospel and Catholic traditions in a country which, as Henry Steele Commager put it, realized the Enlightenment that Europe only imagined. Not only has Catholicism flourished, it has wedded the Catholic conviction of the intrinsic relationship between the truths of faith and human reason to some of the best values of the modern Western Enlightenment by creating the largest independent school system in world history, by vigorously supporting labor unions and insisting that any exchange economy must raise the standard of living for all society, and by encouraging active participation by all in political democratic processes.

These achievements indicated in the past how Catholics could be good Americans. Catholicism blended with (but was never totally identified with) U.S. nationalism and patriotism. (Third-world liberation theologies now experience how strong such a dialectical relationship of religious faith and nationalism can become, how it can be channeled to empower the poor and oppressed to seek freedom and self-determination. The recent Vatican warning about liberation theology should not have surprised U.S. Catholics aware of their own history; it was only eighty-seven years ago that the Vatican similarly warned about "Americanism" confusing the natural and supernatural.) Will U.S. Catholics now collaborate with their compatriots who realize that the millennia of empires and superpowers can only lead to a dead end and that, as John Paul II said at Hiroshima, the very survival of the human race depends upon a profound moral and international transformation? Will U.S. Catholics become deeply committed to a new American experiment in economic justice for all and will their vast educational system encourage genuine excellence and freedom of inquiry?

If the answers to these questions over the coming years and decades are more positive than negative, then we U.S. Catholics will not have buried the gifts we have received. Our descendants in the twenty-second century will look back at our present wars and arms races between capitalist and Communist superpowers with the incredulity with which we now look back at the European wars of religion.

The First Letter of John calls God love. The word used is *agape*, the love revealed in the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus and his call that his disciples learn to love those other than themselves, especially their enemies. The irony of history is that we are now in an era in which we are either going to learn to love our enemies, do good to those who have persecuted us, and turn the other cheek — all those Gospel imperatives which our Enlightenment forefathers like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson dismissed as cowardice and unworthy of "manly virtue" — or we are very liable not to have much of a future at all in the nuclear age. Human history on this planet will either begin developing civilizations of sharing, solidarity, and love, or else. . . .

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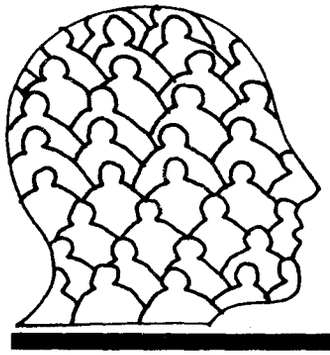

What to do with a 'convergence'

JOHN DESCHNER

WHAT KIND of ecumenical leadership should we expect from the Roman Catholic church after the recent extraordinary synod?

I ask the question as an earnest well-wisher, a United Methodist, and as one who has witnessed the Roman Catholic role in the Faith and Order Commission for nearly twenty years.

It's not a question about the ultimate ecumenical future; that is an article of faith. Nor is this the place to review the present ecumenical situation, with due attention to Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, and Rome's enormous ecumenical contribution at Vatican II and since. It's a more penultimate question, concerning the ecumenical agenda of the 1980s and 1990s. What kind of leadership should we expect from Rome, in particular, concerning three basic aspects of the ecumenical question: the church's oneness in relation to the world, to the Gospel, and to the divided churches?

Concerning the church's unity in relation to the world: The crucial question, not only for Rome but for Geneva, is whether our generation, trained by Western theology to see the issue as secularization, will be able, quite literally, "to do justice" to the many-sidedness of the ecumenical church-world issue.

That issue has rapidly been assuming new shapes. The underlying reason, undigested yet by most of us, is that since about the middle of the twentieth century the majority of Christians live in the third world, which is itself a congeries of worlds. The church-world issue has become in large part the church-worlds issue.

Think what that means. The classical Christian tradition — nurtured in the context of Greco-Roman antiquity, medieval and modern Europe and North America, with all its hard-won unities and cosmic vision, is fast becoming a minority point of view among contemporary Christians. Sixty percent of the synod's delegates were from the third world, we are told; nearly 50 percent of the recently re-appointed Faith and Order Commission represent the third world.

However obvious it may be in Europe and North America that secularization is the fundamental church-world issue, that discussion is elsewhere perceived to be distant and often irrelevant. Bonhoeffer's analysis of a "non-religious" world "come of age" just doesn't fit very well in the third world. Neither does a missionary strategy aimed simply at the "non-believer." The third world poses a congeries of issues: not simply science, technology, and secularism, but culture, human rights, economic injustice, militarism, racial conflict, sexual exploitation, and much more. Significantly, third-world voices in the *oikoumene* say that these attacks upon human personhood and community, and their growing infection of the Christian communion, are the most urgent church-world issues today.

In the experience of the World Council of Churches, various attempts have been made to redefine the underlying issue. At Vancouver (1983), there was a rivalry about what it should be. Peace was stressed by delegates from the Northern Hemisphere, justice by those from the Southern, with culture the coming theme, especially for the Africans.

The essential point to grasp is that these problems cannot adequately be boiled down to one comprehensive issue, not even to the question of human sin, which, both Gutierrez and Cardinal Ratzinger point out, is fundamental to all the problems. The penultimates must also be respected; in this Bonhoeffer was right. Reductionisms will not help. These penultimates and their attendant pluralisms require an adequate diversification in our vision of Christian unity, and an adequate adaptability in our aims for the Christian mission.

And that diversification must challenge our traditional sense in the West of what is theologically important. The Fijian's question about using coconut meat and milk to celebrate the Eucharist must, despite unthinking smiles of Westerners, be considered valid alongside the Europeans' proposals about transignification; the women's insistence on non-traditional language must be considered valid alongside Athanasius's insistence on the term *homoousion*; and Gutierrez's readiness to employ neo-Marxist tools of sociological analysis must be considered valid alongside Thomas's baptism of the classical virtues.

Did the synod confront the new shapes of the church-world issue? Somewhat. The decision to study the future role of the episcopal conferences could become a step toward more representative leadership from the third world. The results of such a study could augment the developing sense of collegiality, and,

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eventually, could make more room for the third world to shape the mind of the magisterium. The theological task which that entails could be ground-breaking, not only for Rome but for the other churches and for the ecumenical situation in general.

CONCERNING the church's unity in relation to the Gospel: Most churches are facing a "crisis in authority." And most know that somehow the answer lies in an adequate manifestation of the church's apostolicity. There we shall find real, not merely formal, authority: in the power of the apostolic faith to "author" renewal of life in Christ.

One striking recent development has been the emphasis on "apostolicity" and "catholicity" alongside "unity" as primary ecumenical themes. Why? Partly because, since Vatican II and the substantial entry of the Orthodox into the WCC, Catholic voices have become more prominent in the ecumenical conversation.

But the more compelling reason is that the conversation about "unity" is maturing. Christ's oneness in the Spirit with the Father urges us to repent of our inability to come to God's table without turning our backs upon each other. Ecumenists are realizing afresh that the ground of church unity is the apostolic faith. Take seriously that you are not simply a Commission on Church Order, say the Orthodox, but a Commission on FAITH and Order, for there can be no church unity which is not first of all a unity in the apostolic faith.

Why write about that to Roman Catholics? Because although no church speaks more urgently about apostolicity, the unity-creating power of the church's apostolicity is not sounding out very clearly today.

There is a waiting, especially among other churches, for something not yet uttered: for something expressed with real authority and "signifying" God's promise of renewal for ecclesial communion and human community.

There is a waiting for church teaching with persuasive authority to represent the source of the church's unity: for an apostolic catechism which is truly universal, universal enough to be recognized, understood, and confessed by, and to initiate members into the communion of all God's people in the one apostolic faith. Can any of the divided churches produce such a catechism without being profoundly changed in the process?

There is a waiting for an expression of the apostolic faith which is open to the pluralism, the mutual surprise and joy of discovery which belongs to an adequately diversified unity. Why shouldn't it be like the openness of man and woman to each other in that fully personal, representative, and mutually submissive encounter which, Roman Catholics have taught, represents like no other "sign" the character of Christ's church? Will any of the divided churches ultimately be able to offer a believable expression of Christian variety in unity today without a deeper re-visioning of the role and ministry of women, and of the community of women and men in the church? Doesn't this question ask of all of us a profounder apostolicity?

There is a waiting, above all, for a convincing expression of the apostolicity of the future. We hear much about the apostolicity of the past: about the origin of our faith and the fidelity of its tradition. That is, of course, fundamental. But is our understanding of apostolicity sufficient to deal with the future convergences and mutual recognitions toward which our ecumenical dialogues are beginning to point?

Concerning the church's unity in relation to the churches: On the premise — absolutely fundamental for the other churches and, as far as I can see, unshaken by the synod — that the "unique church of Christ . . . subsists in the Catholic church" (*Lumen Gentium*, 8), the Christian world has the right and obligation to look to the Roman Catholic church for leadership in discerning the next steps in our common ecumenical journey.

It is becoming clearer to us with every passing year that Rome really does mean that "return" is not the vision of the ecumenical future. If not "return," what? Not "what?" in the ultimate sense, but in the next decades.

The fact that the December meetings postponed a proposal to reduce the secretariats — for Christian unity, non-Christians, and non-believers — to the status of councils was a positive sign. But a sign of new ecumenical creativity needs to be shown. For the ecumenical situation among the divided churches has changed markedly since Vatican II, and something new is being asked for.

TWO POINTS seem compelling to me as I view our ecumenical future as churches with Rome. One is a sheer fact: Rome's bilateral and other ecumenical dialogues of the last twenty years identified enough "convergences" to force the question: What does one do with a "convergence"? That question was still below the horizon at Vatican II, but it is unavoidable today. And no church, Rome included, seems to have a very clear answer to it.

Nor should they, when one considers what a remarkable thing a "convergence" actually is. A convergence is not yet a consensus. It is something more fragile and complex. A convergence is a mutual identification of a possible doctrinal consensus still out ahead of the divided churches, but honestly considered by responsible spokespersons to be attainable by each church in faithfulness to its own witness to the apostolic faith. More convergences than most of us realize have been discovered in bilateral dialogues, like the Anglican/Roman Catholic, and in multilateral ones, like Faith and Order's "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" (BEM).

I need not point out the large theological agenda which such convergences imply: material clarifications of specific convergences such as the vision of the historic episcopate in BEM, and formal clarification of the nature and implications of a convergence beginning to take shape in the widespread "reception" of ecumenical documents.

But a second very important point necessarily follows: Whatever is to be done with convergences, it cannot ultimately and rightly be done by any one of the divided churches, not even by the Roman Catholic church alone, but only by that church which "subsists in the Catholic church," essential "elements" of which, Vatican II tells us, "can be found

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outside of her visible structure."

That almost certainly implies, in the not distant future, truly ecumenical — and increasingly canonically authoritative — convocations or councils in which the mind and faith of that one "catholic church" can come to fuller and richer expressions. These expressions must be recognizable by other churches, not simply by Rome, as confessing the foundational apostolic faith. Should we not expect creative ecumenical leadership from Rome especially in light of Rome's irreplaceable role in the Faith and Order studies: "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today," and "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community"?

Ecclesial consolidation is not, of course, the primary reason for looking toward such conciliar events. The church-world relation and church-Gospel relation have prior claim. As the Christian church enters the twenty-first century the crucial question is surely whether it will together confess the apostolic faith afresh as a word of hope for the divided and conflicted human communities on this planet.

But such a confession of faith demands new instruments of confession — ecclesial instruments to which the "convergences" point. Without them the twenty-first century will not receive from the churches a clear sign of hope for the renewal of human community. And if, as some say, the next century is to be one of controversy between "North" and "South," a clear sign of reconciliation, lived out by the One Church in both North and South, is surely the inescapable vocation of the People of God.

For the sake of those human communities, in the name of that one apostolic faith, we need the creative ecumenical leadership now which Rome has an eminent vocation to provide.

Will it do so?

Screen

TENUOUS PLACES

OUT OF AFRICA & THE COLOR PURPLE

THE COLOR PURPLE proves at least two things. First, Hollywood has decided that America can take films with all-black casts: in this respect, the film fulfills what *A Soldier's Story* had led us to anticipate. Second, Steven Spielberg can direct serious "adult" melodrama, not just science fiction epics which appeal predominantly to youthful audiences. Here Spielberg has adapted Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of Southern black women enduring both racial and sexual oppression at the turn of the century. Spiel-

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berg and his cast (Margaret Avery, Rae Dawn Chong, Oprah Winfrey, and Whoopi Goldberg as the heroine, Celie) make *The Color Purple* creditable and worthwhile.

To be sure, its theme is important, especially with so many contemporary examples of innocents enduring petty tyrants who abuse them because of race, sex, or both. The film's plot maps the growth of an alliance between two victims, Celie and Shug, the beautiful jazz singer pursued by Celie's brutal husband, "Mister." At first, Shug only sees ugliness in Celie; eventually she comes to identify with her in the different kinds of sexual abuse that they endure.

The film celebrates the solidarity of such women and, in the case of Celie and Shug, depicts a restrained lesbian affection. These women's stories remind one of Faulkner's succinct tribute to the black family who outlasted the madness of the Compsons in *The Sound and The Fury*: "they endured."

Unfortunately, *The Color Purple* also proves that craft and good intention do not a great movie make. Indeed, the film suffers from a veritable overdose of nobility and craftsmanship, especially awkward in view of its initial attempts at emotional understatement. But while little is said explicitly concerning what Celie is feeling, every directorial touch is so finely calibrated that we get the point all too clearly. This film makes such an overly deliberate effort to teach us something soulful that all spiritedness gets lost in the process. At times I wished that Spielberg would regress to the energetic brashness of earlier films (*Jaws, E.T.*, and *Close Encounters*), where extravagant action hid the contrivances which understatement exposes. Here, where character is everything, the director should be less visible. But from the first shot — an annoying, manipulative introduction of Celie in a cornfield — Spielberg makes his control and his intentions much too obvious. I lost my fear for her, and consequently my empathy, because I saw she was in such good hands.

Throughout the film, there is a painful contradiction between understatement concerning character, and overstatement via photography, especially overly pretty, overly neat, suggestive shots. One scene, in which Celie watches Mister ask her father not for Celie's hand but for her sister's, is especially annoying: Spielberg has Celie observing through a perfect circle on a frosted window. Mister continues to lust after Celie's sister once he and Celie are married; inevitably, we must endure a contrived rape scene of the sister, terminated by a clichéd kick in the groin. The one good sequence early on — depicting the forced parting of the two sisters — is ruined by blaring music. Shortly after, when Shug arrives, Mister makes her a comically ridiculous meal; predictably, Celie quickly outcooks him. It's a boring tip-off.

Some viewers may be able to tolerate Spielberg's methods and continue to care for the characters, despite these manipulations. Perhaps *The Color Purple* is the kind of film that is bound to divide audiences; emotional understatement with a heavy directorial hand is a risky mix. Those able to tolerate this may see in *The Color Purple* a depiction of goodness, femininity, and human solidarity against oppression. But to me, *The Color Purple* fails to sing; it merely hums the blues.

WHAT MAKES ONE want to forgive *Out of Africa* its sins? A simple thing: whatever its defects, it catches some of the superb spare melody of Isak Dinesen's prose, her love of early twentieth-century Africa, her affection for its people, its landscape, its animals. Directed by Sydney Pollack (maker of such fine films as *Tootsie, Three Days of the Condor*, and *Absence of Malice*) and written by Kurt Luedtke (Pollack's collaborator on the last movie), *Out of Africa* succeeds despite its diffuseness, its romance, and even one member of its big-name cast.

One star redeems her recent work, Meryl Streep as Karen Blixen, the transplanted Danish baroness who later took the pen name of Dinesen when composing her memoirs. Often overpraised (as if another Bette Davis or Greta Garbo), Streep here cuts crutch-like mannerisms to a minimum, and conveys instead a mix of strength, intelligence, and need. In facing crises in her marriage and on her coffee plantation, she is feminine without being overly sweet, heroic without seeming indomitable. This multifaceted performance creates a human character, far away from the single-note roles she has provided recently (especially in *Plenty*). She even seems to be having real fun acting, and has rarely been better than in several shrewd exchanges with natives, specfically her cook, Kamante, and houseboy, Farah, even in silly scenes with a cuckoo clock. *Out of Africa* is no comedy, but here Streep gets to reveal talents in depicting a range of emotions that her previous films have too often denied her.

What goes wrong in *Out of Africa* is the love plot. The fine

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German actor, Klaus Maria Brandeaur, is adequate as a rascally and constitutionally unfaithful Baron Blixen, whom Streep tries to convert with genuine love. When he cannot reform, Streep turns to an English hunter played by Robert Redford. (Actually, he shows up and saves her life too predictably when a lion endangers her.) Streep, understandably, wants reliable company; she and Redford get involved in a tug of war about freedom, which has to carry the middle of the film. But one never really cares about the outcome, partly because the issues are presented in a clichéd fashion, and partly because Redford doesn't make his part convincing. Pollack is fond of staging battles of wit between two points of view, never quite reconciling them. The problem here is that Redford's just isn't interesting.

Redford's best line concerns not love, but land. That, in fact, is where the film, Anteaus-like, takes its strength. When Streep sounds too possessive of the natives who work on her farm, he reprimands her, "It's always my Kikuyu, my Africa, my farm. But we're not owners here, Karen; we're just passing through." There are other fine lines in the screenplay, but they are often detachable from their dramatic setting. But land, and what one can hope for it, becomes a leitmotif that ties the film together and gives it power. Streep, who initially describes herself as merely a "mental traveler," quotes a native proverb that "the earth was made round so that we would not see too far down to the end of the road." *Out of Africa*'s best moments convey humanity's deep need for place and the tenuousness of our existence in any given place on earth.

I can imagine a better director of *Out of Africa* (Caroll Ballard of *The Black Stallion* and *Never Cry Wolf*). But one of Pollack's great strengths is tight film editing (was any movie ever better edited than *Tootsie*?), and with it he makes one section in *Out of Africa* unforgettable. Oddly, it involves a time when Streep has to leave Africa to cure syphilis, contracted courtesy of her husband. Plot interregnums are often awkward, but Pollack makes a virtue of necessity, providing a quick sequence of shots of her Kenyan home and Streep's voice-over describing her yearning to go back. Then, over Streep's own voice, Pollack floats some soft Kikuyu chants. In beauty it approaches the heights of Streep's trips across Africa. (The film sequence of marching Masai is worth many other movies this year.) This "exile" passage is also painful to watch. It makes you wish deeper and harder for the happiness of a film character than in quite some time. It registers the director's surest grasp of the dignified nostalgia of Isak Dinesen herself.

TOM O'BRIEN

Books: RUNNING DIFFICULTIES

FERRARO: MY STORY

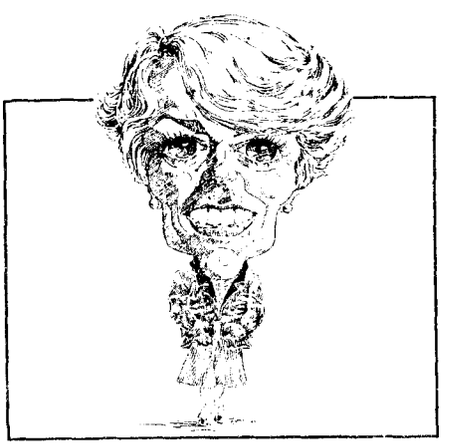
Geraldine A. Ferraro with Linda Bird Francke

Bantam Books, $17.95, 340 pp.

Mary C. Segers

GERALDINE FERRARO'S memoir about the 1984 presidential campaign is disappointing in some respects but it is a pleasantly readable, informative book overall. The book is essentially a political autobiography written with an eye to possible future campaigns, which means that the reader expecting a complete, unvarnished account of the 1984 election will come away from Ferraro's book unsatisfied. The style of the book also seems rather sterile and clichéd, geared more to a mass-market, bestseller audience than to the serious reader interested in learning first-hand, from a major participant, the historical import and consequences of the 1984 election.

Negative comments are not intended to detract from the merits of this account, however. Reading Ferraro's story, one gets a sense of how difficult it is generally to run for high public office in the United States and how particularly difficult it is — in these times of conservative and anti-feminist backlash — for a woman to be a candidate. Whether it was Ted Koppel rudely cross-examining Ferraro on "Nightline" regarding her position on anti-satellite weapons or Marvin Kalb asking her on "Meet the Press," "Are you strong enough to push the button?" or George Bush's press secretary saying, "She's too bitchy," it becomes clear that a woman running for high office will probably encounter opposition no male candidate faces. "I wasn't prepared," Ferraro writes, "for the depth of the fury, the bigotry, and the sexism my candidacy would unleash."



Ferraro herself comes across as a capable, smart, shrewd congresswoman. "Always the realist," she initially had strong doubts whether the Democrats would select a female candidate for vice-president. We are told that she backed John Glenn for president in the early days of the campaign, and that in 1982 she was asked to be national chairperson of the Mondale campaign (she declined). We learn that, because she was a party activist, she was the choice of "Team A," a small group of Washington insiders — female civil servants and congressional staffers — who spent a good year before the election working to advance the concept of a woman as vice-president. We also learn that she opposed a threatened convention walkout by women's groups if a female candidate were not nominated; she reasoned that a walkout would only undermine the Democrats' primary effort of defeating the Reagan-Bush ticket in the election.

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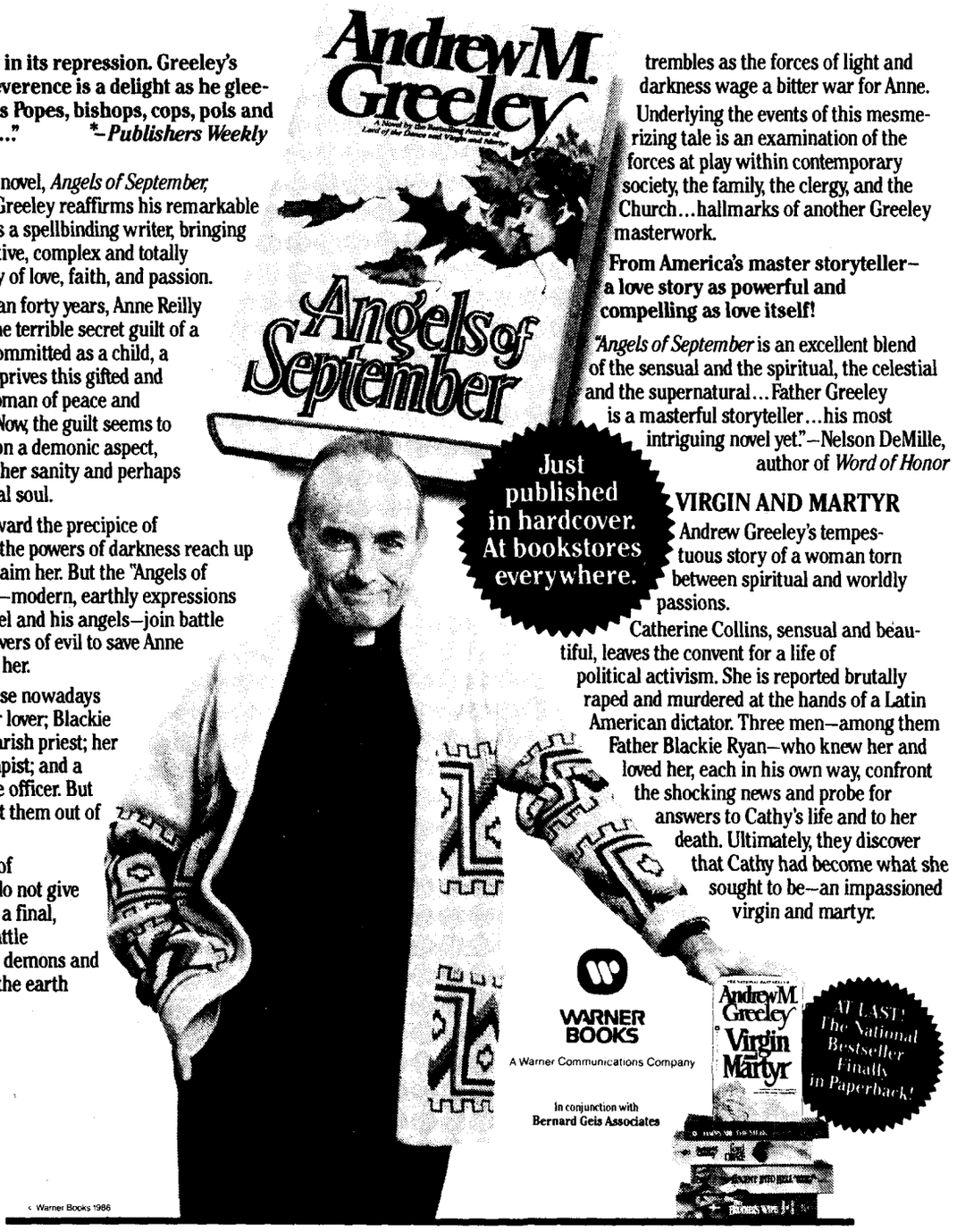
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VIRGIN AND MARTYR

Andrew Greeley's tempestuous story of a woman torn between spiritual and worldly passions.

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narrative we catch glimpses of an astute political professional able to do what public leaders must do — consider the consequences of laws, policies, statements, actions. "Government was my profession," Ferraro states. "I am, if nothing else, a pragmatic politician."

What also comes through in this book is Ferraro's ability as a political campaigner. While the Mondale-Reagan contest was never really close, Ferraro's candidacy generated tremendous enthusiasm — recall those large crowds at the rallies — as people realized the significance of this first in American politics. One indication of her effectiveness is the $6.1 million she amassed at fundraisers (the first time that a Democratic vice-presidential candidate ever amassed as much money as the presidential candidate). Ferraro's warmth and humor are evident in the details of the campaign: her decision to keep on wearing feminine dresses instead of dress-for-success suits, her decision to shake hands with voters rather than press finger-tips, her hiring a speech consultant to help mute that famed Queens accent and slow her speedy delivery at the podium. Of interest also is how she paced herself through nineteen-hour days by keeping to a strict personal daily schedule "so as to avoid burnout."

Of special interest to *Commonweal* readers is the way in which this campaign revealed what might be called the underside of American Catholicism. I refer here to the very troubling issues raised by some Catholic bishops' openly partisan attacks on Ferraro during the campaign. Beginning in June 1984, Archbishop John O'Connor of New York, in company with the leadership of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, argued that Catholic politicians like Governor Cuomo of New York and Congresswoman Ferraro could not justify their stance of personally opposing abortion while accepting legalized abortion. Once Ferraro was nominated, O'Connor intensified his attack. Pointing to a letter Ferraro had signed and sent to congressional colleagues two years earlier, O'Connor contended that she had misrepresented Catholic teaching on abortion by claiming that church teaching was not monolithic. From a careful reading of this letter, it is apparent that O'Connor took an ambiguous sentence and pushed it out of context, thereby misrepresenting exactly what she said and meant.

In response, Ferraro claimed that the disputed sentence was not a reference to church teaching; rather her sentence meant that, descriptively, not all Catholics agreed with or conformed to church teaching on abortion. And she rightly wondered about O'Connor's political motives in raising a firestorm about her alleged misrepresentation at the height of the 1984 election campaign rather that at the time of publication in 1982.

The American electorate was treated to the streetcorner spectacle of the archbishop of New York, in full episcopal

MARY C. SEGERS, *associate professor of political science at Rutgers University, is a visiting lecturer at the Harvard Divinity School this year where she is teaching a course on the American Catholic bishops and public policy. She is co-author, with James Foster, of* Elusive Equality.

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regalia, attacking in partisan fashion the Democratic vice-presidential candidate while neglecting to say anyting about the positions of the Republican candidates. And O'Connor was not alone. After organizers invited Ferraro to march in Philadelphia's Columbus Day parade, John Cardinal Krol threatened to pull out all the Catholic schools and bands if Ferraro marched. So she withdrew, thus allowing Philadelphia organizers to avoid a confrontation with Krol. In New England, eighteen bishops led by Archbishop Bernard Law of Boston issued a statement declaring abortion to be the central issue of the election. The New England bishops did not mention Ferraro by name. But since the Republican and Democratic party platforms were antithetically opposed on the abortion issue, the bishops' emphasis on abortion as the most important issue of the campaign was tantamount to an endorsement of the Republican ticket.

As Ferraro states in her account of this unfortunate episode, "I couldn't believe Archbishop O'Connor was coming after me personally. His singling me out was highly unusual, a contradiction of the longstanding policy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which strongly opposes the targeting of any political candidate by name." Ferraro's incredulity was justified. First, women — Catholic and non-Catholic — could not help noting that Ferraro was being criticized for daring to hold the same position on abortion policy that the most prominent male Catholic politicians in America — Senator Edward Kennedy, House Speaker Tip O'Neill, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan — had held unchallenged by the hierarchy for over a decade. Second, no previous Catholic candidate for high national office had been treated the way Ferraro was by the American bishops. When John F. Kennedy was running for president in 1960, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was largely silent on the fact that he, who was to become the nation's first Catholic president, opposed some church policies, including aid to parochial schools and the appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican. No archbishop so much as uttered a peep when Kennedy said: "I do not speak for my church on public matters — and the church does not speak for me." Why did the bishops treat Ferraro differently from JFK?

Third, the NCCB specifically cautioned against a single-issue approach in the election; yet the statements and actions of Archbishops O'Connor and Law suggested that the only issue prominent members of the Catholic hierarchy really cared about was abortion. Fourth, although the bishops had issued a much publicized pastoral letter on war and peace in 1983, they said precious little about arms control, defense expenditures, and the nuclear freeze during the 1984 campaign — even though there were clear differences between the major parties on these issues. Moreover, they deliberately postponed the release of the first draft of their economics pastoral — which was implicitly critical of current administration policies — to a week after the election so as to appear nonpartisan. No such restraint characterized the actions of certain bishops on the abortion issue.

Any observant Catholic woman, noticing the differential treatment accorded a female candidate by the bishops, could only conclude the worst in 1984 — that some bishops became overtly partisan and, moreover, put on an un-Christian display of outrightly sexist behavior.

It was left to Governor Cuomo, a non-candidate in 1984, to articulate in his Notre Dame speech what Ferraro in the heat of the campaign did not have the time or leisure to explain. A central theme of Governor Cuomo's lecture was that bishops may rightly define abortion as immoral for the individual Catholic, but that church doctrine does not dictate particular political strategies for converting that or other moral teachings into law. Since Aquinas, church teachers have warned against imposing legislative answers to debated questions of public morality where community opinion is genuinely and seriously divided. The pro-choice position adopted by many Catholic political leaders with respect to law and policy simply reflects this traditional analysis. In the end, bishops should respect the judgment and competence of public officeholders as to pru-

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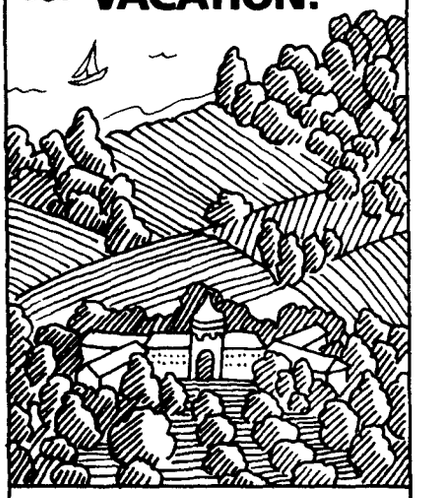

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dent law and policy — just as they expect public leaders to respect the right and competence of churchmen to define church teaching: this is one meaning of religious freedom and church-state separation in American politics.

If we situate the Ferraro candidacy within the context of women's continued exclusion from American politics, we may appreciate the seriousness of the bishops' error during the 1984 campaign. While women are a majority (53 percent) of the population, they hold only 14 percent of state legislative seats, 4 percent of gubernatorial posts, and only 5 percent of congressional seats. By any measure, they are grossly underrepresented in the halls of power in this country. In this context, the Democratic party's nomination of Ferraro as the first female vice-presidential candidate represented a significant advance in the struggle for political equality. Were the American Catholic hierarchy fully committed to the struggle for equality and equity for women, I suspect they would have refrained from the excesses of a partisan, single-issue attack on Ferraro. Instead, because of the highly visible attacks of several prominent bishops, the Catholic church appeared to be reactionary rather than progressive, and failed to celebrate the history-making candidacy of the first woman ever to be nominated by a major party to high national office.

In Brief

TAKING SIDES: THE EDUCATION OF A MILITANT MIND, *by Michael Harrington. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, $16.95, 278 pp.*

Michael Harrington has brought together twenty-five of the many essays he has written over the last three decades. The viability of democratic socialism, both here and overseas; poverty in America; the opposition to the war in Vietnam; the legacy of the New Left; the depoliticization of the novel and the hidden utopianism of Disneyland — the topics illustrate both stages in Harrington's political engagement and recurring objects of his concern. The essays are ushered onstage with a number of brief but provocative introductions and, at one point, even with some of Harrington's own poetry. Two of the essays originally appeared in *Commonweal*. P.S.

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 40)

eral major positions in the U.S. government. The fruit of that experience is found in a *Foreign Affairs* article (Winter 1985/86) and in a new book, *The Other Walls: The Politics of the Arab-Israeli Peace Process* [American Enterprise Institute, $17.95, $9.95 paper, 177 pp.]. In the article Saunders distinguishes between diplomatic negotiations and the political process which makes diplomacy possible. The Sadat visit to Jerusalem made the Camp David negotiations possible.

At the outset of 1986 Saunders sees a modest but crucial U.S. role in creating the political setting for diplomacy. Not the specifics of treaties or the size of the delegations, but the political conditions which allow leaders to negotiate is something he believes the U.S. can help create. It will take more attention and activism than the U.S. is now expending on the Middle East. Saunders is closer to Friedman than Ajami; he believes stalemate in the region is not benign. I believe Saunders should be read and heeded.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

Correspondence

(Continued from page 34)

gay-baiting remains alive and well. Contrary to Carlin, it often does take courage to be publicly supportive of gay rights. . . .

Carlin is absolutely right that you can't separate legislation from its social context. Unfortunately for him, you also can't separate the social context from what legislation actually says. . . . Carlin has argued forcefully in the past on the abortion issue. So has *Commonweal*. Part of the argument has been that a stand against permissive abortion laws is based on genuinely pro-life suppositions and does not imply a punitive sexual morality. Tying legislative questions into the questions of "the inner life, quest for perfection" calls that distinction into question. "A set of rules for ensuring minimum social order" is a fine ambition for lawmakers. Among those rules can be prohibitions of discrimination against homosexuals. Deciding what is moral can and should be left to a broader culture, including bishops and generally eloquent columnist-legislators.

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Right to immorality

Piedmont, Calif.

To the Editors: David Carlin insists on a link between "morality" and "rights" (how about the term "liberties" instead?). Then he protests that those who disagree with his objection to legislating these civil liberties, i.e., providing a "moral endorsement" for lesbians and gays, are intolerant/immoral. Sorry, David, but the straw man you have created misstates the issues.

Those of us who support legislated civil liberties for gays and lesbians do so, not primarily on moral grounds (although most of us believe strongly that it is indeed moral to do so), but on the basis of a regrettably needed action to redress and prevent well-documented, widely experienced denial of basic needs. . . . This country has always gotten itself into trouble when it tries to legally deny private, consensual activities among adults, the results of which do not inflict direct and tangible harm. The opinions of the majority, no matter how "highly" held, regarding the morality of this kind of conduct are, quite frankly, totally irrelevant.

To oppose legislation protecting civil liberties, which have been denied for various reasons, because such legislation implies moral endorsement is a specious argument. Secular *and* church history are replete with cases of applying one's standard of morality — usually amply biblically proof-texted in support thereof — to others (denial of birth control methods; slavery; Prohibition; apartheid; the outlawing of mixed-race marriages . . . just to cite a few). In a pluralistic society such as ours, the guarantee of the individual's basic right to practice consensual "immorality" must prevail over any attempt to deny liberties and enforce standards of conduct by those who have failed to convince/convert by the force of their arguments. JAMES McCREA

Panicky befuddlement

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: David R. Carlin, Jr., may not care if he is honestly "tolerant," but his shabby article against gay rights legislation, genuine at least in its panicky befuddlement, can only serve the cause of hate. . . .

By categorically opposing any basic gay rights legislation, Carlin and some bishops are thereby prepared to condone discrimination against gays in employment, housing, health insurance, etc. The practical issues such Catholics must therefore address are two: how to detect the guilty and how to protect the innocent. What about those over thirty-five trying to live in what, following Carlin's admired St. Paul, was once defended by the church as "the single state of blessedness"? Should their parish priests issue cards they can present to bosses or landlords who couldn't care less about the state of their soul? What about two men or women friends living together, or attempting to: inspections by one married deacon and one secularist skeptic, just to be sure? And what about married gays and (talk about trendy) "bi's": why should they be safe, considering that they could even be guilty of sacrilege? And

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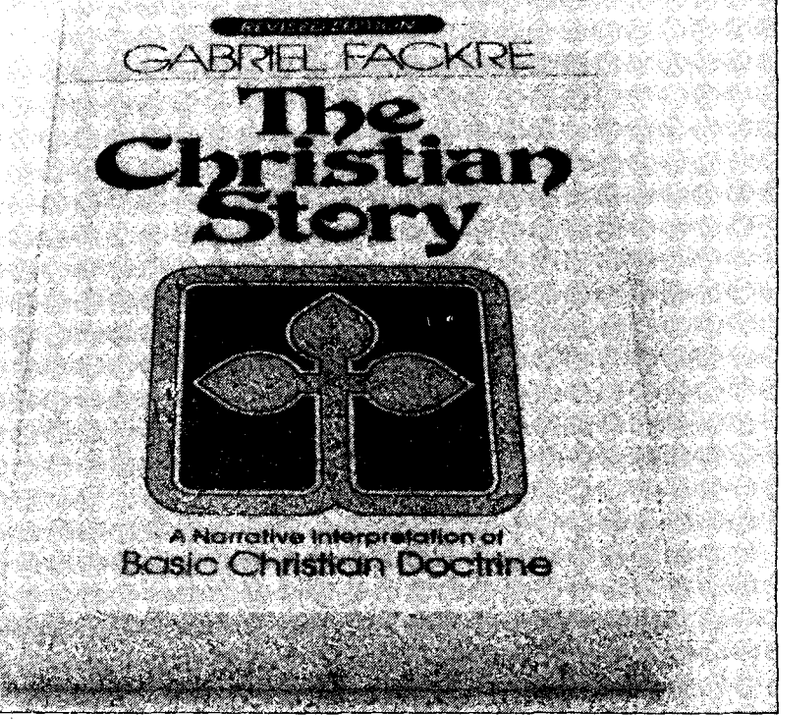

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then what about straights who don't look just right to Carlin's buddies at some "townie" bar — like the husband and wife beat up in Brooklyn by teenagers who excused themselves to the cops by saying they thought both were male?

The secular gay rights movement, and to some extent its churchly counterpart, may well be promoting a false theory of morality (though no more than all those who think they can one day get some kind of "vote" that birth control is no sin). Yet there is as much a Christian obligation to support the gays to the point of full civil rights as there is some good, specifically Catholic reason to go no further. . . .

JOSEPH MASHECK

Eyeing the goal

Providence R.I.

To the Editors: Even if it is true, as Mr. Carlin asserts, that gay rights proponents are promoting gay rights legislation on the basis that the underlying conduct inflicts no direct and tangible harm on anyone — a flawed moral argument, says Mr. Carlin — shoddy moral reasoning should not block an important social goal — eliminating discrimination whenever it rears its ugly head. . . .

JOHN J. RATIGAN

Saintly dickering

Whitehall, Pa.

To the Editors: Mr. Carlin appears to be as unenlightened about the writings of St. Paul as he is about the germane issues of gay rights. He states that the Apostle, "got positively rabid on the subject (i.e., homosexuality) in the first chapter of Romans."

First, Paul never used the word homosexual in any of his writings. There was no such word in the Greek of his day. Second, the passage is not an exhortation about sexual morality. The subject is used analogically to condemn idolatry. Third, Paul is not considering homosexuals at all. He specifically speaks of those who abandon what is natural for them [in

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order] to act in ways unnatural for them, clearly indicating that erring heterosexuals are his target. Paul had no concept of homosexuality as an unwilled, irreversible orientation. Had he such insight the Romans passage would make no sense, since one cannot condemn others for abandoning that which they never possessed.

Mr. Carlin and his bishop fear that the enactment of gay rights legislation would constitute moral approbation for homosexual conduct. There is, apparently, no moral problem with promoting a system of gay apartheid, where those children of God, *ipso facto* morally inferior and worthless, can suffer, without recourse of law, discrimination, oppression, and humiliation. I refer these gentlemen to the *Summa* where Thomas opines on the morality of homosexual conduct: "Because of the diverse conditions of humans, it happens that some acts are virtuous to some people, as appropriate to them, while the same acts are immoral for others, as inappropriate to them."

Gay rights activism insists that sexual morality per se cannot be the determinant for civil rights. If it is, why doesn't Mr. Carlin and his bishop insist upon the disenfranchisement of adulterous and incontinent heterosexuals? JAMES C. KUKITZ

It just happened

Atlanta, Ga.

To the Editors: David Carlin shows complete ignorance about homosexuality. Most heterosexuals can remember back far enough to that instant in time (usually at age 9-11), when a person of the opposite sex was not just a person dressed differently, but a person who suddenly caused a physical and psychological response in them. There was no choice, no preference, etc. It just happened. It was the first manifestation of their personhood as a heterosexual. It was a gift and sign from God on how he wanted them to function as human beings. For them to function in any other way would be unnatural for them and therefore contrary to his plan for them. Most gays, like myself, can also remember that instant in time when it was a person not dressed differently and of the same sex, who brought about the same sudden physical and psychological response. There was no choice, no preference for us. It just happened. It was the first manifestation of our personhood as a homosexual. It was our gift and sign from God on how he wanted us to function as human beings. For us to function in any other way would be unnatural for us and therefore contrary to his plan for us.

Civilization from time out of mind, has not, as Carlin asserts, condemned homosexuality. Rather, it has consistently condemned homosexual acts for heterosexuals, as is so in every reference to such acts in the Old and New Testaments. When given civilizations recognized the true essence of homosexuality, they did not condemn it. These were civilizations not dominated by heterosexual patriarchism. . . .

For Carlin and most heterosexuals, the gay lifestyle is synonymous with sex. Our lifestyle is far more than just "sex" for us. Someday, we gay people will get the opportunity to influence heterosexuals about life. GEORGE R. KISH

The author replies:

I used to feel neglected when my columns evoked few or no letters to the editor. I no longer have such feelings. But though I'm delighted to find people willing to argue with me (and even a few willing to call me unpleasant names — all of them, I'm sure, deserved), I'm afraid the issues I attempted to raise really weren't joined.

In the notorious column in question I was chiefly concerned to assert three propositions: (1) that gay rights legislation aims at and has the effect of providing moral legitimacy for homosexual conduct; (2) that it also has the aim and effect of labeling as bigots those persons who continue to hold that homosexual conduct is *not* morally legitimate; and (3) that the principal argument for the moral legitimacy of homosexual conduct is the pernicious theory that all conduct is morally permissible if it doesn't result in direct and tangible injury to anyone.

If I have read them correctly, only two of the ten letter writers (Higgins and Stifflear) express disagreement with my

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first proposition, no one with my second, and only one (Kish) with my third. Seven of the ten, in other words, express no disagreement at all. I realize of course that a lack of expressed disagreement does not necessarily indicate agreement, but it does indicate that we were largely talking past one another.

Most of the writers seem to believe that there exist serious problems of discrimination against homosexuals in housing, employment, etc., and that gay rights laws would be helpful in correcting this situation. Possibly so. I did not deny this in the offending column, and I don't deny it now. If discrimination exists and if it could be made plain that the aim of the law is to deal with discrimination and not to confer moral legitimacy upon homosexual conduct (perhaps, as one of the writers, Fr. Calvert, suggests, by writing an explicit disclaimer into the law), I would have no objection to such a law.

I should add, however, that in making a *prima facie* case that discrimination exists it is not enough to narrate a series of sad anecdotes. Instead, it must be shown that gays and lesbians as a class are signficantly inferior to heterosexuals as a class in terms, e.g., of income, occupational prestige, educational levels, quality of housing — the indices normally used to discover invidious social inequalities. To date I am not aware that such inferiority has been demonstrated, but I remain open to correction.

A few comments on some misinterpretations that surfaced in the letters: (1) I didn't say and I don't believe that homosexual conduct between consenting adults should be a criminal offense; (2) I don't think my "buddies" or anyone else should beat up homosexuals in Brooklyn or elsewhere; (3) when I confessed to being an "intolerant homophobe," Fr. Calvert missed my ironic intent. (But this is the sort of thing that happens when you remain too long in Toledo; he should request transfer to Columbus.)

Finally, James Kukitz's readings of St. Paul and St. Thomas are utterly bizarre. His interpretation (echoed by George Kish) of Romans 1:24-27 is derived, I strongly suspect, from John Boswell's intriguing but frequently unsound work of gay-revisionist history, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. His Aquinas quote is from *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 94, art. 4, reply 3 — but it has nothing whatever to do with homosexuality! Thomas's real views on that subject may be found in S.T., II-II, Q. 154, arts. 11 and 12.

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

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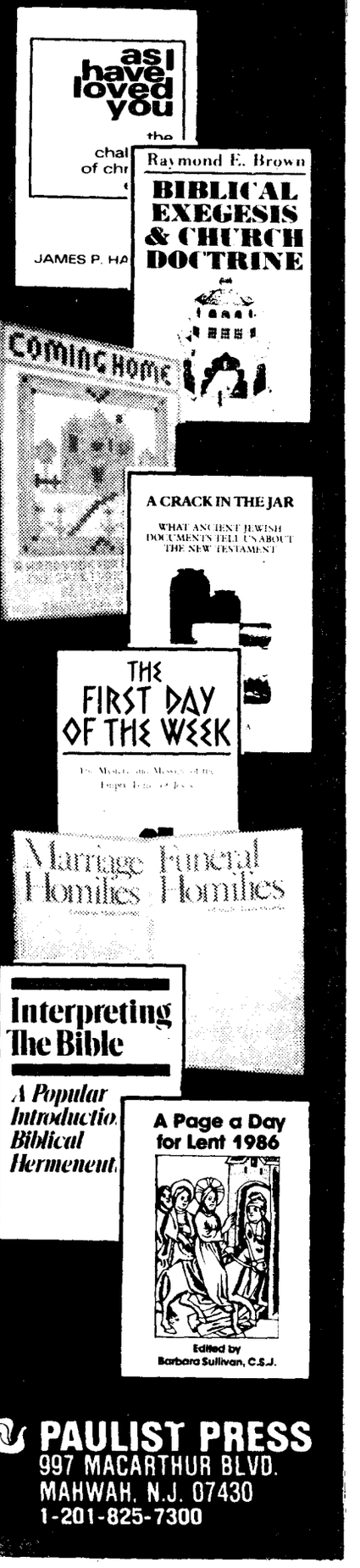
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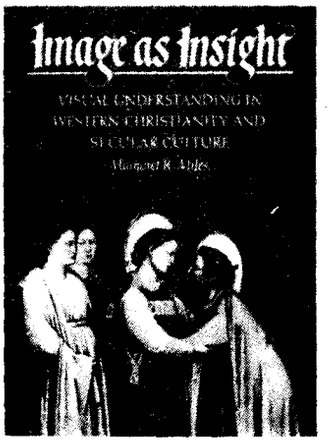

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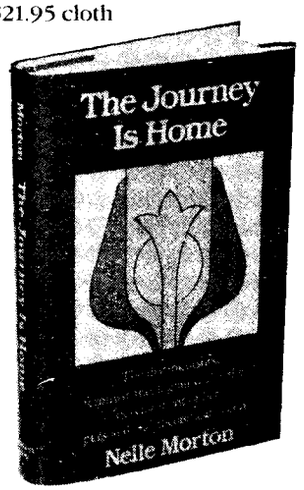

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